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28 HUMOROUS STORIES

✧ ✧ OLD AND NEW ✧ ✧

BY

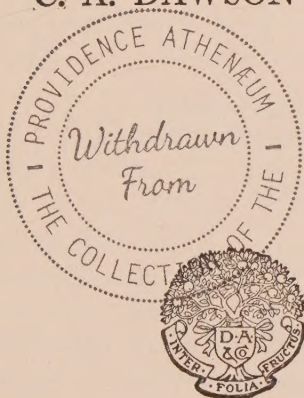
TWENTY AND EIGHT AUTHORS

EDITED BY

ERNEST RHYS

AND

C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT.



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FOREWORD

The only way with humour as with music, is to produce it. We may not be agreed about its kinds—there is the humour of a year or season, which next year seems as dead as last night's champagne and there is the humour which is good for ever.

Allowing for fickleness of taste and change of fashion, we have tried here to give tales that have real salt in them—that show what Falstaff called “the humour of the age” in its variety. The Victorian mood is not ignored and Tom Hood can be contrasted with P. G. Wodehouse, Mark Twain with Joseph C. Lincoln, Cuthbert Bede with W. W. Jacobs. In some, the startling difference between style and mode of attack is in itself matter for amusement and our narrative comedians have been put into a prose pageant which represents yesterday and to-day and leaves the Comic Muse to act as umpire. Our acknowledgments are due to those publishers and living writers who are represented, and who have allowed their stories to be reprinted.

E. R.
C. A. D. S.



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❧ OLD AND NEW ❧

OGDEN WILLIAMS AND THE JOHNNY-CAKE

By JOSEPH C. LINCOLN

“**O**GDEN WILLIAMS tried to patronize me when I first came back here and took this depot,” said Captain Sol Berry, the Depot Master, to the men in the little waiting-room, “and I just smiled and asked him what the market price of johnny-cake was these days. He got red clear up to the brim of his tall hat. Humph! ’twas funny.”

“The market price of *johnny-cake*! He must have thought you was loony.”

“No. I’m the last man he’d think was loony. You see I met him afore he came here to live at all.”

“You did? Where?”

“I’ve told you how I went over to Wellmouth and boarded a spell, got sick of that, and, just to be doin’ somethin’ and not for the money, bought a catboat and took out sailin’ parties from Wixon and Wingate’s summer hotel.”

“And you met Mr. Williams? Well, I snum! Was he at the hotel?”

“No, not exactly. I met him sort of casual this second time.”

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"*Second time?* Had you met him afore that?"

"Don't get ahead of the yarn, Sim. It happened this way: You see I was comin' along the road between East Wellmouth and the Center when I run afoul of him. He was fat and shiny, and drivin' a skittish horse hitched to a fancy buggy. When he sighted me he hove to and hailed.

"'Here you!' says he, in a voice as fat as the rest of him. 'Your name's Berry, ain't it?'

"'Yup,' says I.

"'Methusalum Berry or Jehoshaphat Berry or Sheba Berry, or something like that? Hey?' he says.

"'Well,' says I, 'the last shot you fired comes nighest the bull's eye. They christened me Solomon, but 'twa'n't my fault; I was young at the time and they took advantage.'

"He grinned a kind of lopsided grin, like he had a lemon in his mouth, and commenced to cuss the horse for tryin' to climb a pine tree. 'I knew 'twas some Bible outrage or other,' he says. 'There's more Bible names in this forsaken sand heap than there is Christians, a good sight. When I meet a man with a Bible name and chin whiskers I hang on to my watch. The feller that sets out to do me has got to have a better make up than that, you bet your life. Well, see here, King Sol; can you run a gasoline launch?'

"'Why, yes, I guess I can run 'most any kind of the everyday kinds,' says I, pullin' thoughtful at my own chin whiskers. This fat man had got me interested. He was so polite and folksy in his remarks. Didn't seem to stand on no ceremony, as you might say. Likewise there was a kind of familiar somethin' about his face. I knew

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mighty well I'd never met him afore, and yet I seemed to have a floatin' memory of him, same as a chap remembers the taste of the senna and salts his ma made him take when he was little.

" 'All right,' says he, sharp. 'Then you come around to my landin' to-morrer mornin' at eight o'clock prompt and take me out in my launch to the cod-fishin' grounds. I'll give you ten dollars to take me out there and back.'

" 'Well,' says I, 'ten dollars is a good price enough. Do I furnish——'

" 'You furnish nothin' except your grub,' he interrupts. 'The launch'll be ready and the lines and hooks and bait'll be ready. My own man was to do the job, but he and I had a heart-to-heart talk just now and I told him where he could go and go quick. No smart Alec gets the best of me, even if he has got a month's contract. You run that launch and put me on the fishin' grounds. I pay you for that and bringin' me back again. And I furnish my own extras and you can furnish yours. I don't want any of your Yankee bargainin'. See?'

" 'I saw. There wa'n't no real reason why I couldn't take the job. 'Twas well along into September; the hotel was closed for the season; and about all I had on my hands just then was time.

" 'All right,' says I, 'it's a deal. If you'll guarantee to have your launch ready I——'

" 'That's my business,' he says. 'It'll be ready. If it ain't you'll get your pay just the same. To-morrer mornin' at eight o'clock. And don't you forget and be late. Gid-dap, you black-guard!' says he to the horse.

" 'Hold on, just a minute,' I hollers, runnin' after him. 'I don't want to be curious nor nosey, you understand,

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but seems, 's if it might help me to be on time if I knew where your launch was goin' to be and what your name was.'

"He pulled up then. 'Humph!' he says, 'if you don't know my name and more about my private affairs than I do myself, you're the only one in this county that don't. My name's Williams, and I live in what you folks call the Lathrop place over there toward Trumet. The launch is at my landin' down in front of the house.'

"He drove off then and I walked along thinkin'. I knew who he was now, of course. There was consider'ble talk when the Lathrop place was rented, and I gathered that the feller who hired it answered to the hail of Williams and was a retired banker, sufferin' from an enlarged income and the diseases that go along with it. He lived alone up there in the big house, except for a cranky housekeeper and two or three servants. This was afore he got married, Sim; his wife's tamed him a little. Then the yarns about his temper and language would have filled a log book.

"But all this was way to one side of the mark-buoy, so fur as I was concerned. I'd cruised with cranks afore and I thought I could stand this one—ten dollars' worth of him, anyhow. Bluster and big talk may scare some folks, but to me they're like Hunt Hepsy Parker's false teeth, the further off you be from 'em the more real they look. So the next mornin' I was up bright and early and on my way over to the Lathrop landin'.

"The launch was there, made fast alongside the little wharf. Nice, slick-lookin' craft she was, too, all varnish and gilt gorgeousness. I'd liked her better if she'd carried a sail, for it's my experience that canvas is a

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handy thing to have aboard in case of need ; but she looked seaworthy enough and built for speed.

"While I was standin' on the pier lookin' down at her I heard footsteps and brisk remarks from behind the bushes on the bank, and here comes Williams, puffin' and blowin', followed by a sulky-lookin' hired man totin' a deckload of sweaters and ileskins, with a lunch basket on top. Williams himself wan't carryin' anything but his temper, but he hadn't forgot none of that.

"'Hello Berry,' says he to me. 'You are on time, ain't you. Blessed if it ain't a comfort to find somebody who'll do what I tell 'em. Now you,' he says to the servant, 'put them things aboard and clear out as quick as you've a mind to. You and I are through ; understand? Don't let me find you hangin' around the place when I get back. Cast off, Sol!'

"The man dumped the dunnage into the launch, pretty average ugly, and me and the boss climbed aboard. I cast off.

"'Mr. Williams,' says the man, kind of pleadin', 'ain't you goin' to pay me the rest of my month's wages?'

"Williams told him he wasn't, and added trimmin's to make it emphatic.

"I started the engine and we moved out at a good clip. All at once that hired man runs to the end of the wharf and calls after us.

"'All right for you, you fat-head!' he yells, 'You'll be sorry for what you done to me.'

"I cal'late the boss would have liked to go back and lick him, but I was hired to go a-fishin', not to watch a one-sided prize fight, and I thought 'twas high time we started.

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"The name of the launch was the *Shootin' Star*, and she certainly lived up to it. 'Twas one of them slick, greasy days, with no sea worth mentionin' and we biled along fine. We had to, because the cod ledge is a good many mile away, 'round Sandy P'int out to sea, and, judgin' by what I'd seen of Fatty so fur, I wa'n't hankerin' to spend more time with him than was necessary. More'n that, there was fog signs showin'.

" 'When was you figgerin' on gettin' back, Mr. Williams?' I asked him.

" 'When I've caught as many fish as I want to,' he says. 'I told that housekeeper of mine that I'd be back when I got good and ready; it might be to-night and it might be ten days from now. "If I ain't back in a week you can hunt me up," I told her; "but not before. And that goes." I've got her trained all right. She knows me. It's a pity if a man can't be independent of females.'

"I knew consider'ble many men that was subjects for pity, 'cordin' to that rule. But I wa'n't in for no week's cruise, and I told him so. He said of course not; we'd be home that evenin'.

"The *Shootin' Star* kept slippin' along. 'Twas a beautiful mornin' and, after a spell, it had its effect, even on a crippled disposition like that banker man's. He lit up a cigar and begun to get more sociable, in his way. Com-menced to ask me questions about myself.

"By and by he says: 'Berry, I suppose you figger that it's a smart thing to get ten dollars out of me for a trip like this, hey?'

" 'Not if it's to last a week, I don't,' says I.

" 'It's your lookout if it does,' he says prompt. 'You

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get ten for takin' me out and back. If you ain't back on time 'tain't my fault.'

" 'Unless this craft breaks down,' I says.

" ' 'Twon't break down. I looked after that. My motto is to look out for number one every time, and it's a mighty good motto. At any rate, it's made my money for me.'

"He went on, preachin' about business shrewdness and how it paid, and how mean and tricky in little deals we Rubes was, and yet we didn't appreciate how to manage big things, till I got kind of sick of it.

" 'Look here, Mr. Williams,' says I, 'you know how I make my money—what little I do make—or you say you do. Now, if it ain't a sassy question, how did you make yours?'

"Well, he made his by bein' shrewd and careful and always lookin' out for number one. 'Number one' was his hobby. I gathered that the heft of his spare change had come from dickers in stocks and bonds.

" 'Humph!' says I. 'Well, speakin' of tricks and meanness, I've allers heard tell that there was some of them things hitched to the tail of the stock market. What makes the stock market price of—well, of wheat, we'll say?'

"That was regulated, so he said, by the law of supply and demand. If a feller had all the wheat there was and another chap had to have some or starve, why, the first one had a right to gouge t'other chap's last cent away from him afore he let it go.

" 'That's legitimate,' he says. 'That's cornerin' the market. Law of supply and demand exemplified.'

" ' 'Cordin' to that law,' says I, 'when you was so set on fishin' to-day and hunted me up to run your boat here

—'cause I was about the only chap who could run it and we'n't otherwise busy—I'd ought to have charged you twenty dollars instead of ten.'

" 'Sure you had,' he says, grinnin'. 'But you weren't shrewd enough to grasp the situation and do it. Now the deal's closed and it's too late.'

"He went on talkin' about 'pools' and 'deals' and such. How prices of this stock and that was shoved up a-purpose till a lot of folks had put their money in it and then was smashed flat so's all hands but the 'poolers' would be what he called 'squeezed out,' and the gang would get their cash. That was legitimate, too—'high finance,' he said.

" 'But how about the poor folks that had their savin's in them stocks,' I asks, 'and don't know high financin'? Where's the law of supply and demand come in for them?'

"He laughed. 'They supply the suckers and the demand for money,' says he.

"By eleven we was well out towards the fishin' grounds. 'Twas the bad season now; the big fish had struck off still further and there wa'n't another boat in sight. The land was just a yellor and green smooth along the sky line and the waves was runnin' bigger. The *Shootin' Star* was seaworthy, though, and I wa'n't worried about her. The only thing that troubled me was the fog, and that was pilin' up to wind'ard. I'd called Fatty's attention to it when we fust started, but he said he didn't care a red for fog. Well, I didn't much care nuther, for we had a compass aboard and the engine was runnin' fine. What wind there was was blowin' offshore.

"And then, all to once, the engine *stopped* runnin'. I gave the wheel a whirl, but she only coughed, consump-

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tive-like, and quit again. I went for'ard to inspect, and, if you'll believe it, there wa'n't a drop of gasoline left in the tank. The spare cans had ought to have been full, and they was—but 'twas water they was filled with.

“‘Is *this* the way you have your boat ready for me?’ I remarks, sarcastic.

“‘That—that man of mine told me he had everything filled,’ he stammers, lookin’ scart.

“‘Yes,’ says I, ‘and I heard him hint likewise that he was goin’ to make you sorry. I guess he’s done it.’

“Well, sir! the brimstone names that Fatty called that man was somethin’ surprisin’ to hear. When he’d used up all he had in stock he invented new ones. When the praise service was over he turns to me and says: ‘But what are we goin’ to do?’

“‘Do?’ says I. ‘That’s easy. We’re goin’ to drift.’

“And that’s what we done. I tried to anchor, but we wa’n’t over the ledge and the iron wouldn’t reach bottom by a mile, more or less. I rigged up a sail out of the oar and the canvas spray shield, but there wa’n’t wind enough to give us steerageway. So we drifted and drifted, out to sea. And by and by the fog come down and shut us in, and that fixed what little hope I had of bein’ seen by the life patrol on shore.

“The breeze dies out flat about three o’clock. In one way this was a good thing. In another it we’n’t, because we was well out in deep water, and when the wind did come it was likely to come harder’n we needed. However, there wa’n’t nothin’ to do but wait and hope for the best, as the feller said when his wife’s mother was sick.

“It was gettin’ pretty well along toward the edge of the evenin’ when I smelt the wind a-comin’. It came in

puffs at fust, and every puff was healthier than the one previous. Inside of ten minutes it was blowin' hard, and the seas were beginnin' to kick up. I got up my jury rig—the oar and the spray shield—and took the helm. There wa'n't nothin' to do but run afore it, and the land knows where we would fetch up. At any rate, if the compass was right, we was drivin' back into the bay again, for the wind had hauled clear around.

"The *Shootin' Star* jumped and sloshed. Fatty had on all the ileskins and sweaters, but he was shakin' like a custard pie.

"'Oh, oh, heavens!' he chatters. 'What will we do? Will we drown?'

"'Don't know,' says I, tuggin' at the wheel and tryin' to sight the compass. 'You've got the best chance of the two of us, if it's true that fat floats.'

"I thought that might cheer him up some, but it didn't. A big wave heeled us over then and a keg or two of salt water poured over the gunwale. He give a vell and jumped up.

"'My Lord!' he screams. 'We're sinkin'. Help! Help!'

"'Set down!' I roared. 'Thought you knew how to act in a boat. Set down! d'ye hear me? *Set down and set still!*'

"He set. Likewise he shivered and groaned. It got darker all the time and the wind freshened every minute. I expected to see that jury mast go by the board at any time. Lucky for us it held.

"No use tellin' about the next couple of hours. 'Cordin' to my reckonin' they was years and we'd ought to have sailed plumb through the broadside of the Cape, and

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be makin' a quick run for Afriky. But at last we got into smoother water, and then, right acrost our bows, showed up a white strip. The fog had pretty well blowed clear and I could see it.

" 'Land, ho!' I yells. 'Stand by! *We're* goin' to bump.' "

"Well, we did. Steerin' anyways but dead ahead was out of the question, and all I could do was set my teeth and trust in my bein' a member of the church. The *Shootin' Star* hit that beach like she was the real article. Overboard went oar and canvas and grub pails, and everything else that wa'n't nailed down, includin' Fatty and me. I grabbed him by the collar and wallowed ashore.

" 'Awk! hawk!' he gasps, chokin', 'I'm drowned.'

"I let him be drowned, for the minute. I had the launch to think of, and somehow or 'nother I got hold of her rodin' and hauled the anchor up above the tide mark. Then I attended to my passenger.

" 'Where are we?' he asks.

"I looked around. Close by was nothin' but beach-grass and seaweed and sand. A little ways off was a clump of scrub pines and bayberry bushes that looked sort of familiar. And back of them was a little board shanty that looked more familiar still. I rubbed the salt out of my eyes.

" '*Well!*' says I, 'I swan to man!'

" 'What is it?' he says. 'Do you know where we are? Whose house is that?'

"I looked hard at the shanty.

" 'Humph!' I grunted. 'I do declare! Talk about a feller's comin' back to his own. Whose shanty is that? Well, it's mine if you want to know. The power that

looks out for the lame and the lazy has hove us ashore on Woodchuck Island, and that's a piece of real estate I own.'

"It sounds crazy enough, that's a fact; but it was true. Woodchuck Island is a little mite of a sandheap off in the bay, two mile from shore and ten from the nearest town. I'd bought it and put up a shanty for a gunnin' shack; took city gunners down there, once in a while, the fall before. That summer I'd leased it to a friend of mine, name of Darius Baker, who used it while he was lobsterin'. The gale had driven us straight in from sea, 'way past Sandy P'int and on to the island. 'Twas like hittin' a nail head in a board fence, but we'd done it. Shows what Providence can do when it sets out.

"I explained some of this to Williams as we waded through the sand to the shanty.

"'But is this Baker chap here now?' he asks.

"'I'm afraid not,' says I. 'The lobster season's about over, and he was goin' South on a yacht this week. Still, he wa'n't to go till Saturday and perhaps——'

"But the shanty was empty when we got there. I fumbled around in the tin matchbox and lit the kerosene lamp in the bracket on the wall. Then I turned to Williams.

"'Well,' says I, 'we're lucky for once in——'

"Then I stopped. When he went overboard the water had washed off his hat. Likewise it had washed off his long black hair—which was a wig—and his head was all round and shiny and bald, like a gull's egg, like a gull's egg out in a rainstorm."

"I knew he wore a wig," interrupted one of his hearers.

"Of course you do. Everybody does now. But he

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wa'n't such a prophet in Israel then as he's come to be since, and folks wa'n't acquainted with his personal beauties.

" 'What are you staring at?' he says.

"I fetched a long breath. 'Nothin',' says I. 'Nothin'.'

"But for the rest of that next ha'f hour I went around in a kind of daze, as if *my* wig had gone and part of my head with it. When a feller has been doin' a puzzle it kind of satisfies him to find out the answer. And I'd done my puzzle.

"I knew where I'd met Mr. Williams afore."

"You did?" cried one of the men.

"Um-hm. Wait a while. Well, Fatty went to bed, in one of the hay bunks, pretty soon after that. He stripped to his underclothes and turned in under the patch-work comforters. He was too beat out to want any supper, even if there'd been any in sight. I built a fire in the rusty cook stove and dried his duds and mine. Then I set down in the busted chair and begun to think. After a spell I got up and took account of stock, as you might say, of the eatables in the shanty. Darius had carted off his own grub and what there was on hand was mine, left over from the gunnin' season—a hunk of salt pork in a pickle tub, some corn meal in a tin pail, some musty white flour in another pail, a little coffee, a little sugar and salt, and a can of condensed milk. I took these things out of the locker they was in, looked 'em over, put 'em back again and sprung the padlock. Then I put the key into my pocket and went back to my chair to do some more thinkin'.

"Next mornin' I was up early and when the banker turned out I was fryin' a couple of slices of the pork

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and had some coffee b'ilin'. Likewise there was a pan of johnny-cake in the oven. The wind had gone down consider'ble, but 'twas foggy and thick again, which was a pleasin' state of affairs for yours truly.

"Williams smelt the cookin' almost afore he got his eyes open.

"'Hurry up with that breakfast,' he says to me. 'I'm hungry as a wolf.'

"I didn't say nothin' then; just went ahead with my cookin'. He got into his clothes and went outdoor. Pretty soon he comes back, cussin' the weather.

"'See here, Mr. Williams,' says I, 'how about them orders to your housekeeper? Are they straight? Won't she have you hunted up for a week?'

"He coloured up pretty red, but from what he said I made out that she wouldn't. I gathered that him and the old lady wa'n't real chummy. She give him his grub and her services, and he give her the Old Harry and her wages. She wouldn't hunt for him, not till she was ordered to. She'd be only too glad to have him—out of the way.

"'Humph!' says I. 'Then I cal'late we'll enjoy the scenery on this garden spot of creation until the week's up.'

"'What do you mean?' says he.

"'Well,' I says, 'the launch is out of commission, unless it should rain gasoline, and at this time of year there ain't likely to be a boat within hailin' distance of this island; 'specially if the weather holds bad.'

"He swore a blue streak, payin' partic'lar attention to the housekeeper for her general stupidity and to me because I'd got him, so he said, into this scrape. I didn't

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say nothin'; but set the table, with one plate and one cup and sasser and one knife and fork, hauled up a chair and set down to my breakfast. He hauled up a box and set down, too.

" 'Pass me that corn bread,' says he. 'And why didn't you fry more pork?'

"He was reachin' out for the johnny-cake, but I pulled it out of his way.

" 'Wait a minute, Mr. Williams,' says I. 'While you was snoozin' last night I made out a kind of manifest of the vittles aboard this shanty. 'Cordin' to my figurin' here's scursely enough to last one husky man a week, let alone two husky ones. I paid consider'ble attention to your preachin' yesterday and the text seemed to be to look out for number one. Now in this case I'm the one and I've got to look out for myself. This is my shanty, my island, and my grub. So please keep your hands off that johnny-cake.'

"For a minute or two he set still and stared at me. Didn't seem to sense the situation, as you might say. Then the red b'iled up in his face and over his bald head like a Fundy tide.

" 'Why, you dummed villain!' he shouts. 'Do you mean to starve me?'

" 'You won't starve in a week,' says I, helpin' myself to pork. 'A feller named Tanner, that I read about years ago, lived for forty days on cold water and nothin' else. There's the pump right over in the corner. It's my pump, but I'll stretch a p'int and not charge for it this time.'

" 'You—you—' he stammers, shakin' all over, he was so mad, 'Didn't I hire you——'

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" 'You hired me to take you out to the fishin' grounds and back, provided the launch was made ready by *you*. It wa'n't ready, so *that* contract's busted. And you was to furnish your extrys and I was to furnish mine. Here they be and I need 'em. It's as legitimate a deal as ever I see; perfect case of supply and demand—supply for one and demand for two. As I said afore, I'm the one.'

" 'By thunder!' he growls, standin' up. 'I'll show you——'

"I stood up, too. He was fat and flabby and I was thin and wiry. We looked each other over.

" 'I wouldn't,' says I. 'You're under the doctor's care, you know.'

"So he set down again, not havin' enough strength even to swear, and watched me eat my breakfast. And I ate it slow.

" 'Say,' he says, finally, 'you think you're mighty smart, don't you. Well, I'm It, I guess, for this time. I suppose you'll have no objection to *sellin'* me a breakfast?'

" 'No-o,' says I, 'not a mite of objection. I'll sell you a couple of slices of pork for five dollars a slice and——'

" '*Five dollars a—!*' His mouth dropped open like a main hatch.

" 'Sartin,' I says. 'And two slabs of johnny-cake at five dollars a slab. And a cup of coffee at five dollars a cup. And——'

" 'You're crazy!' he splutters, jumpin' up.

" 'Not much, I ain't. I've been settin' at your feet larnin' high finance, that's all. You don't seem to be onto the real inwardness of this deal. I've got the grub market cornered, that's all. The market price of neces-

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saries is five dollars each now; it's likely to rise any time, but now it's five.'

"He looked at me steady for at least two more minutes. Then he got up and banged out of that shanty. A little later I see him down at the end of the sand pit starin' out into the fog; lookin' for a sail, I presume likely.

"I finished my breakfast and washed up the dishes. He come in by and by. He hadn't had no dinner nor supper, you see, and the salt air gives most folks an almighty appetite.

" 'Say,' he says, 'I've been thinkin'. It's usual in the stock and provision market to deal on a margin. Suppose I pay you a one per cent margin now and——'

" 'All right,' says I, cheerful. 'Then I'll give you a slip of paper sayin' that you've bought such and such slices of pork and hunks of johnny-cake and I'm carryin' 'em for you on a margin. Of course there ain't no delivery of the goods now because——'

" 'Humph!' he interrupts, sour. 'You seem to know more'n I thought you did. Now are you goin' to be decent and make me a fair price or ain't you?'

" 'Can't sell under the latest quotations,' says I. 'That's five now; and spot cash.'

" 'But hang it all!' he says, 'I haven't got money enough with me. Think I carry a national bank around in my clothes?'

" 'You carry a Wellmouth Bank check book,' says I, 'because I see it in your jacket pocket last night when I was dryin' your duds. I'll take a check.'

"He started to say somethin' and then stopped. After a spell he seemed to give in all at once.

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“ ‘Very good,’ he says. ‘You get my breakfast ready and I’ll make out the check.’ ”

“That breakfast cost him twenty-five dollars; thirty really, because he added another five for an extr’y cup of coffee. I told him to make the check payable to ‘Bearer,’ as ’twas quicker to write than ‘Solomon.’ ”

“He had two more meals that day and at bedtime I had his checks amountin’ to ninety-five dollars. The fog stayed with us all the time and nobody come to pick us up. And the next mornin’s outlook was just as bad, bein’ a drizzlin’ rain and a high wind. The mainland beach was in sight but that’s all except salt water and rain.

“He was surprisin’ly cheerful all that day, eatin’ like a horse and givin’ up his meal checks without a whimper. If things had been different from what they was I’d have felt a mean sneak thief. *Bein’* as they was, I counted up the hundred and ten I’d made that day without a pinch of conscience.

“This was a Wednesday. On Thursday, the third day of our Robinson Crusoe business, the weather was still thick, though there was signs of clearin’. Fatty come to me after breakfast—which cost him thirty-five, payable, as usual, to ‘Bearer,’—with almost a grin on his big face.

“ ‘Berry,’ he says, ‘I owe you an apology. I thought you was a green Rube like the rest down here, but you’re as sharp as they make ’em. I ain’t the man to squeal when I get let in on a bad deal, and the chap who can work me for a sucker is entitled to all he can make. But this pay-as-you-go business is too slow and troublesome. What’ll you take for the rest of the grub in the locker, there, spot cash? Be white, and make a fair price.’ ”

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"I'd been expectin' somethin' like this, and I was ready for him.

"Two hundred and sixty-five dollars,' says I, prompt.

"He done a little figgerin'. 'Well, allowin' that I have to put up on this heap of desolation for the better part of four days more, that's cheap, accordin' to your farmer rates,' he says. 'I'll go you. But why not make it two fifty, even?'

"Two hundred and sixty-five's my price,' says I. So he handed over another 'Bearer' check, and his board bill was paid for a week.

"Friday was a fine day, clear as a bell. Me and Williams had a real picnicky, sociable time. Livin' outdoor this way had made him forget his diseases and the doctor, and he showed signs of bein' halfway decent. We loafed around and talked and dug clams to help out the pork—that is, I dug 'em and Fatty superintended. We see no less'n three sailin' craft go by down the bay and tried our best to signal 'em but they didn't pay attention—thought we was gunners or somethin', I presume likely.

"At breakfast on Saturday, Williams begun to ask questions again.

"Sol,' says he, 'it surprised me to find that you knew what a "margin" was. You didn't get that from anything I said. Where did you get it?'

"I leaned back on my box seat.

"Mr. Williams,' says I, 'I cal'late I'll tell you a little story, if you want to hear it. 'Taint much of a yarn, as yarns go, but maybe it'll interest you. The start of it goes back to consider'ble many years ago, when I was poorer'n I be now, and a mighty sight younger. At that time me and another feller, a partner of mine, had a fish

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weir out in the bay here. The mackerel struck in and we done well, unusual well. At the end of the season, not countin' what we'd spent for livin' and expenses, we had a balance owin' us at our fish dealer's up to Boston of five hundred dollars—two fifty apiece. My partner was goin' to be married in the spring and was cal'latin' to use his share to buy furniture for the new house with. So we decided we'd take a trip up to Boston and collect the money, stick it into some savin's bank where 'twould draw interest until spring and then haul it out and use it. 'Twas about every cent we had in the world.

“‘So to Boston we went, collected our money, got the address of a safe bank and started out to find it. But on the way my partner's hat blowed off and the bank address, which was on a slip of paper inside of it, got lost. So we see a sign on a buildin', along with a lot of others, that kind of suggested bankin', and so we stepped into the buildin' and went upstairs to ask the way again.

“‘The place wa'n't very big, but 'twas fixed up fancy and there was a kind of blackboard along the end of the room where a boy was markin' up figgers in chalk. A nice, smilin' lookin' man met us and, when we told him what we wanted, he asked us to set down. Then, afore we knowed it almost, we'd told him the whole story—about the five hundred and all. The feller said to hold on a spell and he'd go along with us and show us where the savin's bank was himself.

“‘So we waited and all the time the figgers kept goin' up on the board, under the signs of “Pork” and “Wheat” and “Cotton” and such, and we'd hear how so and so's account was makin' a thousand a day, and the like of that. After a while the nice man, who it turned out was

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one of the bosses of the concern, told us what it meant. Seemed there was a big "rise" in the market and them that bought now was bound to get rich quick. Consequent we said we wished we could buy and get rich, too. And the smilin' chap says, "Let's go have some lunch." "

"Williams laughed. 'Ho, ho!' says he. 'Expensive lunch, was it?'

" 'Most extravagant meal of vittles ever I got away with,' I says. 'Cost me and my partner two hundred and fifty apiece, that lunch did. We stayed in Boston two days, and on the afternoon of the second day we was on our way back totin' a couple of neat but expensive slips of paper signifyin' that we'd bought December and May wheat on a one per cent margin. We was a hundred ahead already, 'cordin' to the blackboard and was figgerin' what sort of palaces we'd build when we cashed in.

" 'Ain't no use preachin' a long sermon over the remains. 'Twas a simple funeral and nobody sent flowers. Inside of a month we was cleaned out and the wheat place had gone out of business—failed, busted, you understand. Our fish dealer friend asked some questions, and found out the shebang wa'n't a real stock dealer's at all. 'Twas what they call a "bucket shop," and we'd bought nothin' but air, and paid a commission for buying it. And the smilin', nice man that run the swindle had been hangin' on the edge of bust for a long while and knowed 'twas comin'. Our five hundred had helped to pay his way to a healthier climate, that's all.'

" 'Hold on a minute,' says Fatty, lookin' more interested. 'What was the name of the firm that took you greenhorns in?'

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“ ‘ ’Twas the Empire Bond, Stock and Grain Exchange.’ says I. ‘And ’twas on Derbyshire Street.’

“He gave a little jump. Then he says, slow, ‘Hu-u-m! I—see.’

“ ‘Yes,’ says I. ‘I thought you would. You had a mustache then, and your namē was diff’rent, but you seemed familiar just the same. When your false hair got washed off I knew you right away.’

“He took out his pocket pen and his check book and done a little figgerin’.

“ ‘Humph!’ he says again. ‘You lost five hundred and I’ve paid you five hundred and five. What’s the five for?’

“ ‘That’s my commission on the sales,’ I says.

“And just then comes a hail from outside the shanty. Out we bolted and there was Sam Davis, just steppin’ ashore from his power boat. Williams’ housekeeper had strained a p’int and had shaded her orders by a couple of days.

“Williams and Sam started for home right off. I followed in the *Shootin’ Star*, havin’ borrered gasoline enough for the run. I reached the dock ha’f an hour after they did, and there was Fatty waitin’ for me.

“ ‘Berry,’ says he, ‘I’ve a word or two to say to you. I ain’t kickin’ at your givin’ me fit for tat, or tryin’ to. Turn about’s fair play, if you can call the turn. But it’s against my principles to allow anybody to beat me on a business deal. Do you suppose,’ he says, ‘that I’d have paid your robber’s prices without a word if I hadn’t had somethin’ up my sleeve? Why, man,’ says he, ‘I gave you my *checks*, not cash. And I’ve just telephoned to the Wellworth Bank to stop payment on those checks.

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They're no earthly use to you; see? There's one or two things about high finance that you don't know even yet.'

"And he rocked back and forth on his heels and laughed.

"I held up my hand. 'Wait a jiffy, Mr. Williams,' says I. 'I guess these checks are all right. When we fust landed in Woodchuck, I judged by the look of the shanty that Baker hadn't left it for good. I cal'lated he'd be back. And sure enough he come back, in his catboat, on Thursday evenin', after you'd turned in. Them checks was payable to "Bearer," you remember, so I give 'em to him. He was to cash 'em in the fust thing Friday mornin', and I guess you'll find he's done it.'

"His eyes and mouth opened together. '*What?*' he bellers. 'Do you mean to say that a boat stopped at that dummed island and *didn't take us off?*'

"'Oh,' says I, 'Darius didn't feel called on to take you off, not after I told him who you was. You see, Mr. Williams,' I says, 'Darius Baker was my partner in that wheat speculation I was tellin' you about.'"

A RESTLESS NIGHT

By MARK TWAIN

WE were in bed by ten, for we wanted to be up and away on our tramp homeward with the dawn. I hung fire, but Harris went to sleep at once. I hate a man who goes to sleep at once; there is a sort of indefinable something about it which is not exactly an insult, and yet is an insolence; and one which is hard to bear, too. I lay fretting over this injury, and trying to go to sleep; but the harder I tried the wider awake I grew. I got to feeling very lonely in the dark, with no company but an undigested dinner. My mind got a start, by-and-by, and began to consider the beginning of every subject that has ever been thought of; but it never went further than the beginning; it was touch and go; it fled from topic to topic with a frantic speed. At the end of an hour my head was in a perfect whirl, and I was dead tired, fagged out.

The fatigue was so great that presently it began to make some head against the nervous excitement; while imagining myself wide awake, I would really doze into momentary unconsciousness, and come suddenly out of it with a physical jerk which nearly wrenched my joints apart—the delusion of the instant being that I

From *Innocents Abroad*, by Mark Twain, Harper & Brothers, publishers.

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was tumbling backwards over a precipice. After I had fallen over eight or nine precipices, and thus found out that one-half of my brain had been asleep eight or nine times without the wide-awake, hard-working other half suspecting it, the periodical unconsciousness began to extend its spell gradually over more of my brain-territory, and at last I sank into a drowse which grew deeper and deeper, and was doubtless on the very point of becoming a solid, blessed, dreaming stupor, when—what was that?

My dulled faculties dragged themselves partly back to life and took a receptive attitude. Now out of an immense, a limitless distance, came a something which grew and grew, and approached, and presently was recognizable as a sound—it had rather seemed to be a feeling, before. This sound was a mile away, now—perhaps it was the murmur of a storm; and now it was nearer—not a quarter of a mile away. Was it the muffled rasping and grinding of distant machinery? No, it came still nearer. Was it the measured tramp of a marching troop? But it came nearer still, and still nearer—and at last it was right in the room; it was merely a mouse gnawing the woodwork. So I had held my breath all that time for such a trifle.

Well, what was done could not be helped; I would go to sleep at once and make up for lost time. That was a thoughtless thought. Without intending it—hardly knowing it—I fell to listening intently to that sound, and even unconsciously counting the strokes of the mouse's nutmeg-grater.

Presently I was deriving exquisite suffering from this employment, yet maybe I could have endured it if the

mouse had attended steadily to his work: but he did not do that; he stopped every now and then, and I suffered more while waiting and listening for him to begin again than I did while he was gnawing. Along at first I was mentally offering a reward of five—six—ten dollars for that mouse; but towards the last I was offering rewards that were entirely beyond my means. I close-reefed my ears—that is to say, I bent the flaps of them down, and furled them into five or six folds and pressed them against the hearing orifice—but it did no good: the faculty was so sharpened by nervous excitement that it was become a microphone and could hear through the overlays without trouble.

My anger grew to a frenzy. I finally did what all persons before have done, clear back to Adam—resolved to throw something. I reached down and got my walking shoes, then sat up in bed and listened, in order to locate the noise exactly. But I couldn't do it; it was as unlocatable as a cricket's noise; and where one thinks that that is, is always the very place where it isn't. So I presently hurled a shoe at random, and with a vicious vigour. It struck the wall over Harris's head and fell down on him; I had not imagined I could throw so far. It woke Harris, and I was glad of it until I found he was not angry; then I was sorry. He soon went to sleep again, which pleased me; but straightway the mouse began again, which roused my temper once more. I did not want to wake Harris a second time, but the gnawing continued until I was compelled to throw the other shoe. This time I broke a mirror—there were two in the room—I got the largest one, of course. Harris woke again, but did not complain, and I was sorrier than ever. I resolved

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that I would suffer all possible torture before I would disturb him a third time.

The mouse eventually retired, and by-and-by I was sinking to sleep, when a clock began to strike; I counted till it was done, and was about to drowse again when another clock began; I counted; then the two great Rathhaus clock angels began to send forth soft, rich, melodious blasts from their long trumpets. I had never heard anything that was so lovely, so weird, or mysterious—but when they got to blowing the quarter hours, they seemed to me to be overdoing the thing. Every time I dropped off for a moment, a new noise woke me. Each time I woke I missed my coverlet, and had to reach down to the floor and get it again.

At last all sleepiness forsook me. I recognized the fact that I was hopelessly and permanently wide awake. Wide awake, and feverish and thirsty. When I had lain tossing there as long as I could endure it, it occurred to me that it would be a good idea to dress and go out in the great square and take a refreshing wash in the fountain, and smoke and reflect there until the remnant of the night was gone.

I believed I could dress in the dark without waking Harris. I had banished my shoes after the mouse, but my slippers would do for a summer night. So I rose softly, and gradually got on everything—down to one sock. I couldn't seem to get on the track of that sock, anyway I could fix it. But I had to have it; so I went down on my hands and knees, with one slipper on and the other in my hand, and began to paw gently round and rake the floor, but without success. I enlarged my circle, and went on pawing and raking. With every pressure of

my knee, how the floor creaked! and every time I chanced to rake against any article it seemed to give out thirty-five or thirty-six times more noise than it would have done in the daytime. In those cases I always stopped and held my breath till I was sure Harris had not awakened—then I crept along again. I moved on and on, but I could not find the sock; I could not seem to find anything but furniture. I could not remember that there was much furniture in the room when I went to bed, but the place was alive with it now—especially chairs—chairs everywhere. Had a couple of families moved in, in the meantime? And I never could seem to *glance* on one of those chairs, but always struck it full and square with my head. My temper rose by steady degrees, and as I pawed on and on, I fell to making vicious comments under my breath.

Finally, with a venomous access of irritation, I said I would leave without the sock; so I rose up and made straight for the door—as I supposed—and suddenly confronted my dim spectral image in the unbroken mirror. It startled the breath out of me for an instant; it also showed me that I was lost, and had no sort of idea where I was. When I realized this I was so angry that I had to sit down on the floor and take hold of something to keep from lifting the roof off with an explosion of opinion. If there had been only one mirror, it might possibly have helped to locate me; but there were two, and two were as bad as a thousand; besides these were on opposite sides of the room. I could see the dim blur of the windows, but in my turned-around condition they were exactly where they ought not to be, and so they only confused me instead of helping me.

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I started to get up, and knocked down an umbrella; it made a noise like a pistol-shot when it struck that hard slick carpetless floor. I grated my teeth and held my breath—Harris did not stir. I set the umbrella slowly and carefully on end against the wall, but as soon as I took my hand away its heel slipped from under it, and down it came again with another bang. I shrunk together and listened a moment in silent fury—no harm done, everything quiet. With the most painstaking care and nicety I stood the umbrella up once more, took my hand away, and down it came again.

I have been strictly reared, but if it had not been so dark and solemn and awful there in that vast lonely room, I do believe I should have said something then which could not be put into a Sunday-school book without injuring the sale of it. If my reasoning powers had not already been sapped dry by my harassments, I would have known better than to try to set an umbrella on end on one of those glassy German floors in the dark; it can't be done in the daytime without four failures to one success. I had one comfort though—Harris was yet still and silent—he had not stirred.

The umbrella could not locate me—there were four standing around the room and all alike. I thought I would feel along the wall and find the door in that way. I rose up and began this operation, but raked down a picture. It was not a large one, but it made noise enough for a panorama. Harris gave out no sound, but I felt that if I experimented any further with the pictures I should be sure to wake him. Better give up trying to get out. Yes, I would find King Arthur's Round Table once more—I had already found it several times—and use it

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'for a base of departure on an exploring tour for my bed; if I could find my bed I could then find my water-pitcher; I could quench my raging thirst and turn in. So I started on my hands and knees, because I could go faster that way, and with more confidence, too, and not knock down things. By-and-by I found the table—with my head—rubbed the bruise a little, then rose up and started, with hands abroad and fingers spread, to balance myself. I found a chair; then the wall; then another chair; then a sofa; then an alpenstock, then another sofa; this confounded me, for I had thought there was only one sofa. I hunted up the table again and took a fresh start; found some more chairs. It occurred to me, now, as it ought to have done before, that, as the table was round, it was therefore of no value as a base to aim from; so I moved off once more, and at random among the wilderness of chairs and sofas—wandered off into unfamiliar regions, and presently knocked a candlestick off a mantelpiece; grabbed at the candlestick and knocked off a lamp; grabbed at the lamp and knocked off a water-pitcher with a rattling crash, and thought to myself, "I've found you at last—I judged I was close upon you." Harris shouted, "Murder!" and "Thieves!" and finished with, "I'm absolutely drowned."

The crash had roused the house. Mr. X. pranced in, in his long night-garment, with a candle, young Z. after him with another candle; a procession swept in at another door, with candles and lanthorns—landlord and two German guests in their nightgowns, and a chambermaid in hers.

I looked around; I was at Harris's bed, a Sabbath day's journey from my own. There was only one sofa; it was

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against the wall; there was only one chair where a body could get at it—I had been revolving around it like a planet, and colliding with it like a comet half the night.

I explained how I had been employing myself and why. Then the landlord's party left, and the rest of us set about our preparations for breakfast, for the dawn was ready to break. I glanced furtively at my pedometer, and found I had made forty-seven miles. But I did not care, for I had come out for a pedestrian tour anyway.

SOAKED IN SEAWEED

Or, Upset in the Ocean (An Old-fashioned Sea Story)

By STEPHEN LEACOCK

IT was in August in 1867 that I stepped on board the deck of the *Saucy Sally*, lying in dock at Gravesend, to fill the berth of second mate.

Let me first say a word about myself.

I was a tall, handsome young fellow, squarely and powerfully built, bronzed by the sun and the moon (and even copper-coloured in spots from the effect of the stars), and with a face in which honesty, intelligence and exceptional brain power were combined with Christianity, simplicity, and modesty.

As I stepped on the deck I could not help a slight feeling of triumph, as I caught sight of my sailor-like features reflected in a tar-barrel that stood beside the mast, while a little later I could scarcely repress a sense of gratification as I noticed them reflected again in a bucket of bilge-water.

"Welcome on board, Mr. Blowhard," called out Captain Bilge, stepping out of the binnacle and shaking hands across the taffrail.

I saw before me a fine sailor-like man of from thirty

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to sixty, clean-shaven, except for an enormous pair of whiskers, a heavy beard, and a thick moustache, powerful in build, and carrying his beam well aft, in a pair of broad duck trousers across the back of which there would have been room to write a history of the British Navy.

Beside him were the first and third mates, both of them being quiet men of poor stature, who looked at Captain Bilge with what seemed to me an apprehensive expression in their eyes.

The vessel was on the eve of departure. Her deck presented that scene of bustle and alacrity dear to the sailor's heart. Men were busy nailing up the masts, hanging the bowsprit over the side, varnishing the lee-scuppers and pouring hot tar down the companion-way.

Captain Bilge, with a megaphone to his lips, kept calling out to the men in his rough sailor fashion:

"Now, then, don't over-exert yourselves, gentlemen. Remember, please, that we have plenty of time. Keep out of the sun as much as you can. Step carefully in the rigging there, Jones: I fear it's just a little high for you. Tut, tut, Williams, don't get yourself so dirty with that tar, you won't look fit to be seen."

I stood leaning over the gaff of the mainsail and thinking—yes, thinking, dear reader, of my mother. I hope that you will think none the less of me for that. Whenever things look dark, I lean up against something and think of mother. If they get positively black, I stand on one leg and think of father. After that I can face anything.

Did I think, too, of another, younger than mother and fairer than father? Yes, I did. "Bear up, darling," I had whispered as she nestled her head beneath my oilskin

and kicked out backward with one heel in the agony of her girlish grief, "in five years the voyage will be over, and after three more like it, I shall come back with money enough to buy a second-hand fishing-net and settle down on shore."

Meantime the ship's preparations were complete. The masts were all in position, the sails nailed up, and men with axes were busily chopping away the gangway.

"All ready?" called the Captain.

"Aye, aye, sir."

"Then hoist the anchor on board and send a man down with the key to open the bar."

Opening the bar! the last sad rite of departure. How often in my voyages have I seen it; the little group of men soon to be exiled from their home, standing about with saddened faces, waiting to see the man with the key open the bar—held there by some strange fascination.

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Next morning with a fair wind astern we had buzzed around the corner of England and were running down the Channel.

I know no finer sight, for those who have never seen it, than the English Channel. It is the highway of the world. Ships of all nations are passing up and down, Dutch, Scotch, Venezuelan, and even American.

Chinese junks rush to and fro. Warships, motor yachts, icebergs, and lumber rafts are everywhere. If I add to this fact that so thick a fog hangs over it that it is entirely hidden from sight, my readers can form some idea of the majesty of the scene.

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We had now been three days at sea. My first sea-sickness was wearing off, and I thought less of father.

On the third morning Captain Bilge descended to my cabin.

"Mr. Blowhard," he said, "I must ask you to stand double watches."

"What is the matter?" I enquired.

"The two other mates have fallen overboard," he said uneasily, and avoiding my eye.

I contented myself with saying, "Very good, sir," but I could not help thinking it a trifle odd that both the mates should have fallen overboard in the same night.

Surely there was some mystery in this.

Two mornings later the Captain appeared at the breakfast-table with the same shifting and uneasy look in his eye.

"Anything wrong, sir?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered, trying to appear at ease and twisting a fried egg to and fro between his fingers with such nervous force as almost to break it in two—"I regret to say that we have lost the bo'sun."

"The bo'sun!" I cried.

"Yes," said Captain Bilge more quietly, "he is overboard. I blame myself for it, partly. It was early this morning. I was holding him up in my arms to look at an iceberg, and, quite accidentally I assure you—I dropped him overboard."

"Captain Bilge," I asked, "have you taken any steps to recover him?"

"Not as yet," he replied uneasily.

I looked at him fixedly, but said nothing.

Ten days passed.

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The mystery thickened. On Thursday two men of the starboard watch were reported missing. On Friday the carpenter's assistant disappeared. On the night of Saturday a circumstance occurred which, slight as it was, gave me some clue as to what was happening.

As I stood at the wheel about midnight, I saw the Captain approach in the darkness, carrying the cabin-boy by the hind leg. The lad was a bright little fellow, whose merry disposition had already endeared him to me, and I watched with some interest to see what the Captain would do to him. Arrived at the stern of the vessel, Captain Bilge looked cautiously around a moment and then dropped the boy into the sea. For a brief instant the lad's head appeared in the phosphorous of the waves. The Captain threw a boot at him, sighed deeply, and went below.

Here then was the key to the mystery! The Captain was throwing the crew overboard. Next morning we met at breakfast as usual.

"Poor little William has fallen overboard," said the Captain, seizing a strip of ship's bacon and tearing at it with his teeth as if he almost meant to eat it.

"Captain," I said, greatly excited and stabbing at a ship's loaf in my agitation with such ferocity as almost to drive my knife into it—"You threw that boy overboard!"

"I did," said Captain Bilge, grown suddenly quiet, "I threw them all over and intend to throw the rest. Listen, Blowhard, you are young, ambitious, and trustworthy. I will confide in you."

Perfectly calm now, he stepped to a locker, rummaged

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in it a moment, and drew out a faded piece of yellow parchment, which he spread on the table. It was a map or chart. In the centre of it was a circle. In the middle of the circle was a small dot and a letter T, while at one side of the map was a letter N, and against it on the other side a letter S.

"What is this?" I asked.

"Can you not guess?" queried Captain Bilge. "It is a desert island."

"Ah!" I rejoined with a sudden flash of intuition, "and N is for North and S is for South."

"Blowhard," said the Captain, striking the table with such force as to cause a loaf of ship's bread to bounce up and down three or four times, "you've struck it. That part of it had not yet occurred to me."

"And the letter T?" I asked.

"The treasure, the buried treasure," said the Captain, and turning the map over, he read from the back of it.— "The point T indicates the spot where the treasure is buried under the sand; it consists of half-a-million Spanish dollars, and is buried in a brown leather dress-suit case."

"And where is the island?" I enquired, mad with excitement.

"That I do not know," said the Captain. "I intend to sail up and down the parallels of latitude till I find it."

"And meantime?"

"Meantime, the first thing to do is to reduce the numbers of the crew so as to have fewer hands to divide among. Come, come," he added in a burst of frankness, which made me love the man in spite of his shortcomings, "will you join me in this? We'll throw them all over,

keeping the cook to the last, dig up the treasure, and be rich for the rest of our lives."

Reader, do you blame me if I said yes? I was young, ardent, ambitious, full of bright hopes and boyish enthusiasm.

"Captain Bilge," I said, putting my hand in his, "I am yours."

"Good," he said, "now go forward to the fore-castle and get an idea what the men are thinking."

I went forward to the men's quarters—a plain room in the front of the ship, with only a rough carpet on the floor, a few simple armchairs, writing-desks, spittoons of a plain pattern, and small brass beds with blue-and-green screens. It was Sunday morning and the men were mostly sitting about in their dressing-gowns.

They rose as I entered and curtsied.

"Sir," said Tompkins, the bo'sun's mate, "I think it my duty to tell you there is a great deal of dissatisfaction among the men."

Several of the men nodded.

"They don't like the way the men keep going over-board," he continued, his voice rising to a tone of uncontrolled passion. "It is positively absurd, sir, and if you will allow me to say so, the men are far from pleased."

"Tompkins," I said sternly, "you must understand that my position will not allow me to listen to mutinous language of this sort."

I returned to the Captain. "I think the men mean mutiny," I said.

"Good," said Captain Bilge, rubbing his hands, "that will get rid of a lot of them, and of course," he added musingly, looking out of the broad old-fashioned port-

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hole at the stern of the cabin, at the heaving waves of the South Atlantic, "I am expecting pirates at any time, and that will take off quite a few of them. However"—and here he pressed the bell for a cabin-boy—"kindly ask Mr. Tompkins to step this way."

"Tompkins," said the Captain as the bo'sun's mate entered, "be good enough to stand on the locker and stick your head through the stern port-hole and tell me what you think of the weather."

Tompkins stood on the locker and put his head and shoulders out of the port.

Taking a leg each we pushed him through. We heard him plump into the sea.

"Tompkins was easy," said Captain Bilge. "Excuse me as I enter his death in the log."

"Yes," he continued presently, "it will be a great help if they mutiny. I suppose they will, sooner or later. It's customary to do so. But I shall take no step to precipitate it until we have first fallen in with pirates. I am expecting them in these latitudes at any time. Meanwhile, Mr. Blowhard," he said, rising, "if you can continue to drop overboard one or two more each week, I shall feel extremely grateful."

•

Three days later we rounded the Cape of Good Hope and entered upon the inky waters of the Indian Ocean. Our course lay now in zigzags and, the weather being favourable, we sailed up and down at a furious rate over a sea as calm as glass.

On the fourth day a pirate ship appeared. Reader, I do not know if you have ever seen a pirate ship. The sight was one to appall the stoutest heart. The entire ship was painted black, a black flag hung at the mast-head, the

sails were black, and on the deck people dressed all in black walked up and down arm-in-arm. The words "Pirate Ship" were painted in white letters on the bow. At the sight of it our crew were visibly cowed. It was a spectacle that would have cowed a dog.

The two ships were brought side by side. They were then lashed tightly together with bag string and binder twine, and a gang plank laid between them. In a moment the pirates swarmed upon our deck, rolling their eyes, gnashing their teeth and filing their nails.

Then the fight began. It lasted two hours—with fifteen minutes off for lunch. It was awful. The men grappled with one another, kicked one another from behind, slapped one another across the face, and in many cases completely lost their temper and tried to bite one another. I noticed one gigantic fellow brandishing a knotted towel, and striking right and left among our men, until Captain Bilge rushed at him and struck him flat across the mouth with a banana skin.

At the end of two hours, by mutual consent, the fight was declared a draw, the points standing at sixty-one and a half against sixty-two.

The ships were unlashed, and with three cheers from each crew, were headed on their way.

"Now, then," said the Captain to me aside, "let us see how many of the crew are sufficiently exhausted to be thrown overboard."

He went below. In a few minutes he reappeared, his face deadly pale.

"Blowhard," he said, "the ship is sinking. One of the pirates (sheer accident, of course, I blame no one) has kicked a hole in the side. Let us sound the well."

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We put our ear to the ship's well. It sounded like water.

The men were put to the pumps and worked with the frenzied effort which only those who have been drowned in a sinking ship can understand.

At six P. M. the well marked one-half an inch of water, at nightfall three-quarters of an inch, and at daybreak, after a night of unremitting toil, seven-eighths of an inch.

By noon of the next day the water had risen to fifteen-sixteenths of an inch, and on the next night the sounding showed thirty-one thirty-seconds of an inch of water in the hold. The situation was desperate. At this rate of increase few, if any, could tell where it would rise to in a few days.

That night the Captain called me to his cabin. He had a book of mathematical tables in front of him, and great sheets of vulgar fractions littered the floor on all sides.

"The ship is bound to sink," he said, "in fact, Blowhard, she is sinking. I can prove it. It may be six months or it may take years, but if she goes on like this, sink she must. There is nothing for it but to abandon her."

That night, in the dead of darkness, while the crew were busy at the pumps, the Captain and I built a raft.

Unobserved we cut down the masts, chopped them into suitable lengths, laid them crosswise in a pile and lashed them tightly together with bootlaces.

Hastily we threw on board a couple of boxes of food and bottles of drinking fluid, a sextant, a chronometer, a gas-meter, a bicycle pump and a few other scientific instruments. Then taking advantage of a roll in the motion

of the ship, we launched the raft, lowered ourselves upon a line, and under cover of the heavy dark of a tropical night, we paddled away from the doomed vessel.

The break of day found us a tiny speck on the Indian Ocean. We looked about as big as this (.).

In the morning, after dressing, and shaving as best we could, we opened our box of food and drink.

Then came the awful horror of our situation.

One by one the Captain took from the box the square blue tins of canned beef which it contained. We counted fifty-two in all. Anxiously and with drawn faces we watched until the last can was lifted from the box. A single thought was in our minds. When the end came the Captain stood up on the raft with wild eyes staring at the sky.

"The can-opener!" he shrieked. "Just Heaven, the can-opener!" He fell prostrate.

Meantime, with trembling hands, I opened the box of bottles. It contained lager-beer bottles, each with a patent tin top. One by one I took them out. There were fifty-two in all. As I withdrew the last one and saw the empty box before me, I shroke out—"The thing! The thing! oh, merciful Heaven! The thing you open them with!"

I fell prostrate upon the Captain.

We awoke to find ourselves still a mere speck upon the ocean. We felt even smaller than before.

Over us was the burnished copper sky of the tropics. The heavy, leaden sea lapped the side of the raft. All about us was a litter of cornbeef cans and lager-beer bottles. Our sufferings in the ensuing days were indescribable. We beat and thumped at the cans with our fists. Even at the risk of spoiling the tins forever we

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hammered them fiercely against the raft. We stamped on them, bit at them and swore at them. We pulled and clawed at the bottles with our hands, and chipped and knocked them against the cans regardless even of breaking the glass and ruining the bottles.

It was futile.

Then day after day we sat in moody silence, gnawed with hunger, with nothing to read, nothing to smoke, and practically nothing to talk about.

On the tenth day the Captain broke silence.

"Get ready the lots, Blowhard," he said. "It's got to come to that."

"Yes," I answered drearily, "we're getting thinner every day."

Then, with the awful prospect of cannibalism before us, we drew lots.

I prepared the lots and held them to the Captain. He drew the longer one.

"Which does that mean," he asked, trembling between hope and despair. "Do I win?"

"No, Bilge," I said sadly, "you lose."

.

But I mustn't dwell on the days that followed—the long, quiet days of lazy dreaming on the raft, during which I slowly built up my strength, which had been shattered by privation. They were days, dear reader, of deep and quiet peace, and yet I cannot recall them without shedding a tear for the brave man who made them what they were.

It was on the fifth day after, that I was awakened from a sound sleep by the bumping of the raft against the shore.

I had eaten perhaps overheartily, and had not observed the vicinity of land.

Before me was an island, the circular shape of which, with its low sandy shore, recalled at once its identity.

"The treasure island," I cried, "at last I am rewarded for all my heroism."

In a fever of haste I rushed to the centre of the island. What was the sight that confronted me? A great hollow scooped in the sand, an empty dress-suit case lying beside it, and on a ship's plank driven deep into the sand, the legend, "*Saucy Sally*, October, 1867." So! The miscreants had made good the vessel, headed it for the island of whose existence they must have learned from the chart we so carelessly left upon the cabin table, and had plundered poor Bilge and me of our well-earned treasure!

Sick with the sense of human ingratitude I sank upon the sand.

The island became my home.

There I eked out a miserable existence, feeding myself on sand and gravel and dressing myself in cactus plants. Years passed. Eating sand and mud slowly undermined my robust constitution. I fell ill. I died. I buried myself.

Would that others who write sea-stories would do as much.

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By ARNOLD BENNETT

I

LADY DAIN said: "Jee, if that portrait stays there much longer, you'll just have to take me off to Pirehill one of these fine mornings."

Pirehill is the seat of the great local hospital; but it is also the seat of the great local lunatic asylum; and when the inhabitants of the Five Towns say merely "Pirehill" they mean the asylum.

"I do declare I can't fancy my food nowadays," said Lady Dain, "and it's all that portrait!" She stared plaintively up at the immense oil-painting which faced her as she sat at the breakfast-table in her spacious and opulent dining-room.

Sir Jehoshaphat made no remark.

Despite Lady Dain's animadversions upon it, despite the undoubted fact that it was generally disliked in the Five Towns, the portrait had cost a thousand pounds (some said guineas), and though not yet two years old it was probably worth at least fifteen hundred in the picture market. For it was a Cressage—it was one of the finest Cressages in existence.

It marked the summit of Sir Jehoshaphat's career. Sir Jehoshaphat's career was, perhaps, the most successful

From *Denry, the Audacious*, by Arnold Bennett, copyright, 1911, George H. Doran Company, publishers.

and brilliant in the entire social history of the Five Towns. This famous man was the principal partner in Dain Brothers. His brother was dead, but two of Sir Jee's sons were in the firm. Dain Brothers were the largest manufacturers of cheap earthenware in the district, catering chiefly for the American and Colonial buyer. They had an extremely bad reputation for cutting prices. They were hated by every other firm in the Five Towns, and, to hear rival manufacturers talk, one would gather the impression that Sir Jee had acquired a tremendous fortune by systematically selling goods under cost. They were hated also by between eighteen and nineteen hundred employees. But such hatred, however virulent, had not marred the progress of Sir Jee's career.

He had meant to make a name and he had made it. The Five Towns might laugh at his vulgar snobbishness. The Five Towns might sneer at his calculated philanthropy. But he was, nevertheless, the best-known man in the Five Towns, and it was precisely his snobbishness and his philanthropy which had carried him to the top. Moreover, he had been the first public man in the Five Towns to gain a knighthood. The Five Towns could not deny that it was very proud indeed of this knighthood. The means by which he had won this distinction were neither here nor there—he had won it. And was he not the father of his native borough? Had he not been three times mayor of his native borough? Was not the whole northern half of the county dotted and spangled by his benefactions, his institutions, his endowments?

And it could not be denied that he sometimes tickled the Five Towns as the Five Towns likes being tickled. There was, for example, the notorious Sneyd incident.

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Sneyd Hall, belonging to the Earl of Chell, lies a few miles south of the Five Towns, and from it the pretty Countess of Chell exercises that condescending meddlesomeness which so frequently exasperates the Five Towns. Sir Jee had got his title by the aid of the Countess—"Interfering Iris," as she is locally dubbed. Shortly afterwards he had contrived to quarrel with the Countess; and the quarrel was conducted by Sir Jee as a quarrel between equals, which delighted the district. Sir Jee's final word in it had been to buy a sizable tract of land near Sneyd village, just off the Sneyd estate, and to erect thereon a mansion quite as imposing as Sneyd Hall, and far more up to date, and to call the mansion Sneyd Castle. A mighty stroke! Iris was furious; the Earl speechless with fury. But they could do nothing. Naturally the Five Towns was tickled.

It was apropos of the house-warming of Sneyd Castle, also of the completion of his third mayoralty, and of the inauguration of the Dain Technical Institute, that the movement had been started (primarily by a few toadies) for tendering to Sir Jee a popular gift worthy to express the profound esteem in which he was officially held in the Five Towns. It having been generally felt that the gift should take the form of a portrait, a local dilettante had suggested Cressage, and when the Five Towns had inquired into Cressage and discovered that that genius from the United States was celebrated throughout the civilized world, and regarded as the equal of Velazquez (whoever Velazquez might be), and that he had painted half the aristocracy, and that his income was regal, the suggestion was accepted and Cressage was approached.

Cressage haughtily consented to paint Sir Jee's portrait

on his usual conditions; namely, that the sitter should go to the little village in Bedfordshire where Cressage had his principal studio, and that the painting should be exhibited at the Royal Academy before being shown anywhere else. (Cressage was an R.A., but no one thought of putting R.A. after his name. He was so big that, instead of the Royal Academy conferring distinction on him, he conferred distinction on the Royal Academy.)

Sir Jee went to Bedfordshire and was rapidly painted, and he came back gloomy. The presentation committee went to Bedfordshire later to inspect the portrait, and they, too, came back gloomy.

Then the Academy Exhibition opened, and the portrait, showing Sir Jee in his robe and chain and in a chair, was instantly hailed as possibly the most glorious masterpiece of modern times. All the critics were of one accord. The Committee and Sir Jee were reassured, but only partially, and Sir Jee rather less so than the committee. For there was something in the enthusiastic criticism which gravely disturbed them. An enlightened generation, thoroughly familiar with the dazzling yearly succession of Cressage's portraits, need not be told what this something was. One critic wrote that Cressage had displayed even more than "his customary astounding insight into character. . . ." Another critic wrote that Cressage's observation was, as usual, "calmly and coldly hostile." Another referred to the "typical provincial mayor, immortalised for the diversion of future ages."

Inhabitants of the Five Towns went to London to see the work for which they had subscribed, and they saw a mean, little, old man, with thin lips and a straggling gray beard, and shifty eyes, and pushful snob written all over

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him; ridiculous in his gewgaws of office. When you looked at the picture close to, it was a meaningless mass of coloured smudges, but when you stood fifteen feet away from it the portrait was absolutely lifelike, amazing, miraculous. It was so wondrously lifelike that some of the inhabitants of the Five Towns burst out laughing. Many people felt sorry—not for Sir Jee—but for Lady Dain. Lady Dain was beloved and genuinely respected. She was a simple, homely, sincere woman, her one weakness being that she had never been able to see through Sir Jee.

Of course, at the presentation ceremony the portrait had been ecstatically referred to as a possession precious forever, and the recipient and his wife pretended to be overflowing with pure joy in the ownership of it.

It had been hanging in the dining-room of Sneyd Castle about sixteen months, when Lady Dain told her husband that it would ultimately drive her into the lunatic asylum.

“Don’t be silly, wife,” said Sir Jee. “I wouldn’t part with that portrait for ten times what it cost.”

This was, to speak bluntly, a downright lie. Sir Jee secretly hated the portrait more than any one hated it. He would have been almost ready to burn down Sneyd Castle in order to get rid of the thing. But it happened that on the previous evening, in conversation with the magistrates’ clerk, his receptive brain had been visited by a less expensive scheme than burning down the castle.

Lady Dain sighed.

“Are you going to town early?” she enquired.

“Yes,” he said. “I’m on the rota to-day.”

He was chairman of the borough Bench of magistrates.

As he drove into town he revolved his scheme and thought it wild and dangerous, but still feasible.

II

On the bench that morning Sir Jee shocked Mr. Sheratt, the magistrates' clerk, and he utterly disgusted Mr. Bourne, superintendent of the borough police. (I do not intend to name the name of the borough—whether Bursley, Henbridge, Knype, Longshaw, or Turnhill. The inhabitants of the Five Towns will know without being told; the rest of the world has no right to know.) There had recently occurred a somewhat thrilling series of burglaries in the district, and the burglars (a gang of them was presumed) had escaped the solicitous attentions of the police. But on the previous afternoon an underling of Mr. Bourne's had caught a man who was generally believed to be wholly or partly responsible for the burglaries. The Five Towns breathed with relief and congratulated Mr. Bourne; and Mr. Bourne was well pleased with himself. The *Staffordshire Signal* headed the item of news, "Smart Capture of a Supposed Burglar." The supposed burglar gave his name as William Smith, and otherwise behaved in an extremely suspicious manner.

Now, Sir Jee, sitting as chief magistrate in the police-court, actually dismissed the charge against the man! Overruling his sole colleague on the Bench that morning, Alderman Easton, he dismissed the charge against William Smith, holding that the evidence for the prosecution was insufficient to justify even a remand. No wonder that that pillar of the law, Mr. Sherratt, was pained and

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shocked. At the conclusion of the case Sir Jehoshaphat said that he would be glad to speak with William Smith afterwards in the magistrates' room, indicating that he sympathised with William Smith and wished to exercise upon William Smith his renowned philanthropy.

And so, about noon, when the Court majestically rose, Sir Jee retired to the magistrates' room, where the humble Alderman Easton was discreet enough not to follow him, and awaited William Smith. And William Smith came, guided thither by a policeman, to whom, in parting from him, he made a rude, surreptitious gesture.

Sir Jee, seated in the armchair which dominates the other chairs round the elm table in the magistrates' room, emitted a preliminary cough.

"Smith," he said sternly, leaning his elbows on the table, "you were very fortunate this morning, you know."

And he gazed at Smith.

Smith stood near the door, cap in hand. He did not resemble a burglar, who surely ought to be big, muscular and masterful. He resembled an under-sized clerk who has been out of work for a long time, but who has nevertheless found the means to eat and drink rather plentifully. He was clothed in a very shabby navy-blue suit, frayed at the wrists and ankles, and greasy in front. His linen collar was brown with dirt, his fingers were dirty, his hair was unkempt and long, and a young and lusty black beard was sprouting on his chin. His boots were not at all pleasant.

"Yes, governor," Smith replied, lightly, with Manchester accent. "And what's your game?"

Sir Jee was taken aback. He, the chairman of the borough Bench, and the leading philanthropist in the

county, to be so spoken to! But what could he do? He himself had legally established Smith's innocence. Smith was free as air, and had a perfect right to adopt any tone he chose to any man he chose. And Sir Jee desired a service from William Smith.

"I was hoping I might be of use to you," said Sir Jehoshaphat diplomatically.

"Well," said Smith, "that's all right, that is. But none of your philanthropic dodges, you know. I don't want to turn over a new leaf, and I don't want a helpin' hand, not none o' these things. And what's more, I don't want a situation. I've got all the situation as I need. But I never refuse money, not beer neither. Never did, and I'm forty years old next month."

"I suppose burgling doesn't pay very well, does it?" Sir Jee boldly ventured.

William Smith laughed coarsely.

"It pays right enough," said he. "But I don't put my money on my back, governor, I put it into a bit of public-house property when I get the chance."

"It may pay," said Sir Jee. "But it is wrong. It is very anti-social."

"Is it, indeed!" Smith returned drily. "Anti-social, is it? Well, I've heard it called plenty o' things in my time, but never that. Now, I should have called it quite sociablelike, sort of making free with strangers, and so on. However," he added, "I came across a cove once as told me crime was nothing but a disease and ought to be treated as such. I asked him for a dozen of port, but he never sent it."

"Ever been caught before?" Sir Jee enquired.

"Not much!" Smith exclaimed. "And this'll be a les-

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son to me, I can tell you. Now, what are you getting at, governor? Because my time's money, my time is."

Sir Jee coughed once more.

"Sit down," said Sir Jee.

And William Smith sat down opposite to him at the table, and put his shiny elbows on the table precisely in the manner of Sir Jee's elbows.

"Well," he cheerfully encouraged Sir Jee.

"How should you like to commit a burglary that was not a crime?" said Sir Jee, his shifty eyes wandering round the room. "A perfectly lawful burglary?"

"What *are* you getting at?" William Smith was genuinely astonished.

"At my residence, Sneyd Castle," Sir Jee proceeded, "there's a large portrait of myself in the dining-room that I want to have stolen. You understand?"

"Stolen?"

"Yes. I want to get rid of it. And I want—er—people to think that it has been stolen."

"Well, why don't you stop up one night and steal it yourself, and then burn it?" William Smith suggested.

"That would be deceitful," said Sir Jee gravely. "I could not tell my friends that the portrait had been stolen if it had not been stolen. The burglary must be entirely genuine."

"What's the figure?" said Smith curtly.

"Figure?"

"What are you going to give me for the job?"

"*Give* you for doing the job?" Sir Jee repeated, his secret and ineradicable meanness aroused. "*Give* you? Why, I'm giving you the opportunity to honestly steal a picture that's worth two thousand pounds—I dare say

it would be worth two thousand pounds in America—and you want to be paid into the bargain! Do you know, my man, that people come all the way from Manchester, and even London, to see that portrait?” He told Smith about the painting.

“Then why are you in such a stew to be rid of it?” queried the burglar.

“That’s my affair,” said Sir Jee. “I don’t like it. Lady Dain doesn’t like it. But it’s a presentation portrait, and so I can’t—you see, Mr. Smith.”

“And how am I going to dispose of it when I’ve got it?” Smith demanded. “You can’t melt a portrait down as if it was silver. By what you say, governor, it’s known all over the blessed world. Seems to me I might just as well try to sell the Nelson Column.”

“Oh, nonsense!” said Sir Jee. “Nonsense. You’ll sell it in America quite easily. It’ll be a fortune to you. Keep it for a year first, and then send it to New York!”

William Smith shook his head and drummed his fingers on the table; and then quite suddenly he brightened and said:

“All right, governor. I’ll take it on, just to oblige you.”

“When can you do it?” asked Sir Jee, hardly concealing his joy. “To-night?”

“No,” said Smith, mysteriously. “I’m engaged to-night.”

“Well, to-morrow night?”

“Nor to-morrow. I’m engaged to-morrow, too.”

“You seem to be very much engaged, my man,” Sir Jee observed.

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"What do you expect?" Smith retorted. "Business is business. I could do it the night after to-morrow."

"But that's Christmas Eve," Sir Joe protested.

"What if it is Christmas Eve?" said Smith coldly.

"Would you prefer Christmas Day? I'm engaged on Boxing Day, *and* the day after."

"Not in the Five Towns, I trust?" Sir Jee remarked.

"No," said Smith shortly. "The Five Towns is about sucked dry."

The affair was arranged for Christmas Eve.

"Now," Sir Jee suggested, "shall I draw you a plan of the castle, so that you can——"

William Smith's face expressed terrific scorn. "Do you suppose," he said, "as I haven't had plans o' your castle ever since it was built? What do you take me for? I'm not a blooming excursionist, I'm not. I'm a business man—that's what I am."

Sir Jee was snubbed, and he agreed submissively to all William Smith's arrangements for the innocent burglary. He perceived that in William Smith he had stumbled on a professional of the highest class, and this good fortune pleased him.

"There's only one thing that riles me," said Smith, in parting, "and that is that you'll go and say that after you'd done everything you could for me I went and burgled your castle. And you'll talk of the ingratitude of the lower classes. I know you, governor!"

III

On the afternoon of the 24th of December Sir Jehoshaphat drove home to Sneyd Castle from the principal of

the three Dain manufactories, and found Lady Dain superintending the work of packing up trunks. He and she were to quit the castle that afternoon in order to spend Christmas on the other side of the Five Towns, under the roof of their eldest son, John, who had a new house, a new wife, and a new baby (male). John was a domineering person, and, being rather proud of his house and all that was his, he had obstinately decided to have his own Christmas at his own hearth. Grandpapa and Grandmamma, drawn by the irresistible attraction of that novelty, a grandson (though Mrs. John *had* declined to have the little thing named Jehoshaphat), had yielded to John's solicitations, and the family gathering, for the first time in history, was not to occur round Sir Jee's mahogany.

Sir Jee, very characteristically, said nothing to Lady Dain immediately. He allowed her to proceed with the packing of the trunks, and then tea was served, and as the time was approaching for the carriage to come round to take them to the station, at last he suddenly remarked:

"I shan't be able to go with you to John's this afternoon."

"Oh, Jee!" she exclaimed. "Really, you are tiresome. Why couldn't you tell me before?"

"I will come over to-morrow morning—perhaps in time for church," he proceeded, ignoring her demand for an explanation.

He always did ignore her demand for an explanation. Indeed, she only asked for explanations in a mechanical and perfunctory manner—she had long since ceased to expect them. Sir Jee had been born like that—devious, mysterious, incalculable. And Lady Dain accepted him

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as he was. She was somewhat surprised, therefore, when he went on:

"I have some minutes of committee meetings that I really must go carefully through and send off to-night, and you know as well as I do that there'll be no chance of doing that at John's. I've telegraphed to John."

He was obviously nervous and self-conscious.

"There's no food in the house," sighed Lady Dain. "And the servants are all going away except Callear, and *he* can't cook your dinner to-night. I think I'd better stay myself and look after you."

"You'll do no such thing," said Sir Jee decisively. "As for my dinner, anything will do for that. The servants have been promised their holiday, to start from this evening, and they must have it. I can manage."

Here spoke the philanthropist with his unshakable sense of justice.

So Lady Dain departed, anxious and worried, having previously arranged something cold for Sir Jee in the dining-room, and instructed Callear about boiling the water for Sir Jee's tea on Christmas morning. Callear was the under-coachman and a useful old man. He it was who would drive Sir Jee to the station on Christmas morning, and then guard the castle and the stables thereof during the absence of the family and the other servants. Callear slept over the stables.

And after Sir Jee had consumed his cold repast in the dining-room the other servants went, and Sir Jee was alone in the castle, facing the portrait.

He had managed the affair fairly well, he thought. Indeed, he had a talent for chicane, and none knew it better than himself. It would have been dangerous if the

servants had been left in the castle. They might have suffered from insomnia, and heard William Smith, and interfered with the operations of William Smith. On the other hand, Sir Jee had no intention of leaving the castle uninhabited to the mercies of William Smith. He felt that he himself must be on the spot to see that everything went right and that nothing went wrong. Thus the previously arranged scheme for the servants' holiday fitted perfectly into his plans, and all that he had had to do was to refuse to leave the castle till the morrow. It was ideal.

Nevertheless, he was a little afraid of what he had done, and of what he was going to permit William Smith to do. It was certainly dangerous—certainly rather a wild scheme. However, the die was cast. And within twelve hours he would be relieved of the intolerable incubus of the portrait.

And when he thought of the humiliations which that portrait had caused him, when he remembered the remarks of his sons concerning it, especially John's remarks; when he recalled phrases about it in London newspapers, he squirmed, and told himself that no scheme for getting rid of it could be too wild and perilous. And, after all, the burglary dodge was the only dodge, absolutely the only conceivable practical method of disposing of the portrait—except burning down the castle. And surely it was preferable to a conflagration, to arson! Moreover, in case of fire at the castle some blundering fool would be sure to cry: "The portrait! The portrait must be saved!" And the portrait would be saved.

He gazed at the repulsive, hateful thing. In the centre of the lower part of the massive gold frame was the

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legend: "Presented to Sir Jehoshaphat Dain, Knight, as a mark of public esteem and gratitude," etc. He wondered if William Smith would steal the frame. It was to be hoped that he would not steal the frame. In fact, William Smith would find it very difficult to steal that frame unless he had an accomplice or so.

"This is the last time I shall see *you!*" said Sir Jee to the portrait.

Then he unfastened the catch of one of the windows in the dining-room (as per contract with William Smith), turned out the electric light, and went to bed in the deserted castle.

He went to bed, but not to sleep. It was no part of Sir Jee's programme to sleep. He intended to listen, and he did listen.

And about two o'clock, precisely the hour which William Smith had indicated, he fancied he heard muffled and discreet noises. Then he was sure that he heard them. William Smith had kept his word. Then the noises ceased for a period, and then they recommenced. Sir Jee restrained his curiosity as long as he could, and when he could restrain it no more he rose and silently opened his bedroom window and put his head out into the nipping night air of Christmas. And by good fortune he saw the vast oblong of the picture, carefully enveloped in sheets, being passed by a couple of dark figures through the dining-room window to the garden outside. William Smith had a colleague, then, and he was taking the frame as well as the canvas. Sir Jee watched the men disappear down the avenue, and they did not reappear. Sir Jee returned to bed.

Yes, he felt himself equal to facing it out with his

family and friends. He felt himself equal to pretending that he had no knowledge of the burglary.

Having slept a few hours, he got up early and, half-dressed, descended to the dining-room just to see what sort of a mess William Smith had made.

The canvas of the portrait lay flat on the hearthrug, with the following words written on it in chalk: "This is no use to me." It was the massive gold frame that had gone.

Further, as was soon discovered, all the silver had gone. Not a spoon was left in the castle.

THE MUSICAL PRODIGY

By F. ANSTEY

SCENE—*The box-office, a few minutes before the hour at which little MASTER POUSHKIN POPONANOFF, the very latest, youngest, and smallest of Precocious Pianists, has announced his Morning Concert. Music-loving Public besieging pigeon-hole.*

CLERK (*in answer to several frantic appeals*)

All the shilling seats are gone long ago.

APPLICANTS (*imploringly*)

But there's standing-room, surely? We don't mind as long as we can get in!

CLERK (*relenting*)

It's just possible there may be a few inches left at the back—you can go in and see, if you like.

(*Applicants pass in gratefully, to stand patiently, for two hours and a half, in a tropical climate.*)

IN THE CONCERT-ROOM

POLITE ATTENDANT (*to a STRONG-MINDED MATRON, who insists on standing with her numerous family in the gangway between the five-shilling seats*)

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28 HUMOROUS STORIES

I really must ask you to go further back, Madam—your tickets were for the shilling seats—you have no right to block the passage here.

THE S.M.

There's no room in the shilling seats. I have brought my family all the way from Haverstock Hill on purpose to hear little Poushkin, and it's not likely I shall go away now.

(The POLITE A. summons two other P.A.'s, who urge the propriety of retiring.)

THE S.M. *(with spirit)*

If those are your orders, execute them! I am only a woman, with these defenceless children, but I warn you that I will yield to nothing but superior force—you will have to drag us out!

(The P.A.'s smile at one another feebly, and remain irresolute, with the bearing of baffled tyrants at a minor theatre.)

THE S.M. *(following up her advantage)*

Then perhaps you will let us have some programmes? *(The P.A.'s supply her meekly, and retire in discomfiture, leaving the S.M. and her family, flushed but triumphant, in undisputed possession.)*

MUSICAL AMATEUR *in Stall (consulting programme)*

Nothing very new, I see. How often I've heard Liszt play that Rhapsody! But it will really be very curious and instructive to see how this child takes it. I hear some of his renderings are quite original.

LITTLE MASTER POUSHKIN *appears on platform, and is received with tumultuous applause.*

ENTHUSIASTIC PERSON *(who has read up an account of youthful pianist in the paper)*

THE MUSICAL PRODIGY

Isn't he sweet? Such perfect self-possession! See, he has to have a little pair of steps to climb on the music-stool! Do you know he positively refuses to play a note unless they put one of his toy soldiers on the piano? I think that's so charming of him!

HERR HEUMACHER SONNENSCHNEIN (*in the front row, to his Infant Daughter, a still more surprising Phenomenon, who is coming out next week*)

Remember, Otilie, you clap your hands the instant the first movement is over; but the flowers you will throw when I tell you.

A MOTHER, to MASTER JACKY (*who has just begun the piano, and has been brought here to rouse his ambition*)
Now, Jacky, you see what a little boy can do when he tries.

JACKY (*who has instantly conceived a violent aversion to the V.P.*)

It's all very fine, but I'd like to see him sit down to play some of my scales—he wouldn't look so cocky *then!*

GOVERNESS (*improvingly, to SPECTACLED SCHOOLGIRL*)

Just think, my dear Millie, how he must have *practised* to be able to play like this!

THE S.S. (*with a shudder*)

It's too awful to think of!

THE ENTH. PERSON

His playing is simply too wonderful! I like him better than little Hegmann, or even Hoffner—he's much *prettier*.

DISCRIMINATING P.

Well, he has less firmness than young Hegmann, but more dash; less delicacy, perhaps, than little Hoffner,

but he makes up for that in feeling; and, besides, he's their junior by several years.

A CONNOISSEUR

I assure you I've heard that "Starlight Symphony" played by all the first pianists in Europe, and not one of them—not *one*—entered into the yearning discontent, the dreamy despair, the hopeless passion, with such feeling and perfect comprehension as this little Poushkin—a child of seven and a half, Sir—marvellous!

(End of first part; MASTER Poushkin skips off with evident relief, and is recalled again and again, amidst rapturous plaudits. Little MISS OTTILIE throws her flowers when no one is looking, and they fall unnoticed, under the piano, to the intense annoyance of her parent, who had counted on a paragraph in the papers.)

THE MATRON WITH THE FAMILY (to MALE OCCUPANTS of Stalls)

Might I ask you kindly to allow my daughters to take your seats for a short time? They are quite unused to standing so long. . . . Thank you, so much!

(Male occupants rise, and feeling a delicacy in reclaiming their seats remain standing for remainder of performance.)

THE ENTH. PERSON

They say little Poushkin spends the intervals in playing with his Noah's Ark and sucking sweets. Here he comes again. Look, his little cheek is quite bulged out. I shouldn't wonder if he had a bull's-eye in it. Isn't he a *duck*? Do you notice how he always sticks his little legs straight out when he comes to the *Scherzo*?

(The Concert concludes by little Poushkin taking the

THE MUSICAL PRODIGY

lead in a trio with two full-grown performers as his foils. More recalls, general furore, subsiding, as the audience breaks up, into calmer criticism.)

FIRST CAVILLER

After all, you know, I think I prefer De Pachmann. This boy took the *Allegro* rather too slow, I thought.

SECOND DITTO

And it's so easy to substitute single notes for octaves. I don't call it legitimate, either, for *my* part.

AN UNAPPRECIATED GENIUS

Too sickening, I call it, all this fuss about a kid! Why, I might play Mendelssohn and Chopin till I fell under the piano, and none of these people would give me a hand. *Would* they?

HIS FRIEND

Well, not unless you could get yourself up in a frock and bows.

HUMBLE FRIEND (*to* WEALTHY PATRONESS)

Well, my dear, I always say just what I think, as you know, and I *do* say that your little Emmeline plays with quite as much *correctness* as this little Russian boy, and *far* more brilliancy of execution.

THE W.P.

Do you really think so? Of course she has been thoroughly well taught—and, now I think of it, if you've nothing else to do to-morrow evening, you might like to come in about ten—I can't ask you to dinner, because our table is full, but——

(HUMBLE FRIEND *feels herself rewarded.*)

A PROUD MOTHER

I've been thinking of such a charming plan, if we can only manage it. I wonder if we could get this little

28 HUMOROUS STORIES

Poushkin to come to us one evening, and play that duet from *Zampa* with our Josephine—she's very nearly perfect in it now.

HERR HEUMACHER SONNENSCHN (to his DAUGHTER)

By this time to-morrow week there shall be one little boy, my Ottilie, with the nose out of joint.

PROFESSIONAL (*recognizing juvenile* EX-PHENOMENON)

And so you are no longer playing?

EX-PHENOM.

I am too big become—I can now stretch the octave.

THE PUGSLEY PAPERS

By THOMAS HOOD

Letter I—From Master Richard Pugsley to Master Robert Rogers, at No. 132, Barbican.

DEAR BOB,

Huzza! Here I am in Lincolnshire! It's good-bye to Wellingtons and Cossacks, Ladies' double channels, Gentleman's stout calf, and ditto, ditto. They've all been sold off under prime cost, and the old Shoe Mart is disposed of, goodwill and fixtures, for ever and ever. Father has been made a rich Squire of by Will, and we've got a house and fields, and trees of our own. Such a garden, Bob! It beats White Conduit.

Now, Bob, I'll tell you what I want. I want you to come down here for the holidays. Don't be afraid. Ask your sister to ask your Mother to ask your Father to let you come. It's only ninety mile. If you're out of pocket-money you can walk, and beg a lift now and then, or swing by the dickeys. Put on cordroys and don't care for cut behind. The two prentices, George and Will, are here to be made farmers of, and brother Nick is took home from school to help in agriculture. We like farming very much, it's capital fun. Us four have got a gun, and go out shooting: it's a famous gun, and sure to go off if you don't full cock it. Tiger is to be our shooting dog

as soon as he has left off killing the sheep. He's a real savage and worries cats beautiful. Before Father comes down we mean to bait our bull with him.

There's plenty of New Rivers about, and we are going a fishing as soon as we have mended our top joint. We've killed one of our sheep on the sly to get gentles. We've a pony too, to ride upon when we can catch him, but he's loose in the paddock, and has neither mane nor tail to signify to lay hold of. Isn't it prime, Bob? You *must* come. If your Mother won't give your Father leave to allow you—run away. Remember you turn up Goswell Street to go to Lincolnshire, and ask for Middlefen Hall. There's a pond full of frogs, but we won't pelt them till you come, but let it be before Sunday, as there's our own orchard to rob, and the fruit's to be gathered on Monday.

If you like sucking raw eggs, we know where the hens lay, and mother don't; and I'm bound there's lots of birds' nests. Do come, Bob, and I'll show you the wasp's nest, and everything that can make you comfortable. I daresay you could borrow your Father's volunteer musket of him without his knowing of it; but be sure anyhow to bring the ramrod, as we have mislaid ours by firing it off. Don't forget some birdlime, Bob—and some fish-hooks—and some different sort of shot—and some gut and some gunpowder—and a gentle-box, and some flints—some May flies,—and a powder-horn—and a landing net and a dog-whistle—and some porcupine quills, and a bullet mould—and a trolling-winch, and a shot-belt and a tin can. You pay for 'em, Bob, and I'll owe it you.

Your old friend and schoolfellow,

RICHARD PUGSLEY.

THE PUGSLEY PAPERS

Letter II—From Miss Dorothy Pugsley to Miss Jemima Moggridge, at Gregory House Establishment for Young Ladies, Mile End.

MY DEAR MISS JEMIMA,

Providence having been pleased to remove my domestic duties from Barbican to Lincolnshire, I trust I shall have strength of constitution to fulfil my new allotted line of life. As we are not sent into this world to be idle, and my sister Anastasia has declined housewifery, I have undertaken the Dairy, and the Brewery, and the Baking, and the Poultry, the Pigs and the Pastry,—and though I feel fatigued at first, use reconciles to labours and trials, more severe than I at present enjoy. Altho' things may not turn out to wish at present, yet all well-directed efforts are sure to meet reward in the end, and altho' I have chumped and churned two days running, and it's nothing yet but curds and whey, I should be wrong to despair of eating butter of my own making before I die. Considering the adulteration committed by every article in London, I was never happier in any prospect, than of drinking my own milk, fattening my own calves, and laying my own eggs. We cackle so much I am sure we new-lay somewhere, tho' I cannot find out our nests; and I am looking every day to have chickens, as one pepper-and-salt-coloured hen has been sitting these two months. When a poor ignorant bird sets me such an example of patience, how can I repine at the hardest domestic drudgery! Mother and I have worked like horses to be sure, ever since we came to the estate, but if we die in it, we know it's for the good of the family, and to agreeably surprise my Father, who is still in town winding up

his books. For my own part, if it was right to look at things so selfishly, I should say I never was so happy in my life; tho' I own I have cried more since coming here than I ever remember before. You will confess my crosses and losses have been unusual trials, when I tell you, out of all my makings and bakings, and brewings, and preservings, there has been nothing either eatable or drinkable; and what is more painful to an affectionate mind,—have half poisoned the whole family with home-made ketchup of toadstools, by mistake for mushrooms. When I reflect that they are preserved, I ought not to grieve about my damsons and bullaces, done by Mrs. Maria Dover's receipt.

Among other things we came into a beautiful closet of old China, which, I am shocked to say, is all destroyed by my preserving. The bullaces and damsons fermented, and blew up a great jar with a violent shock that smashed all the tea and coffee cups, and left nothing but the handles hanging in rows on the tenter-hooks. But to a resigned spirit there's always some comfort in calamities, and if the preserves work and foment so, there's some hope that my beer will, as it has been a month next Monday in the mash tub. As for the loss of the elder wine, candour compels me to say it was my own fault for letting the poor blind little animals crawl into the copper; but experience dictates next year not to boil the berries and kittens at the same time.

I mean to attempt cream cheese as soon as we can get cream,—but as yet we can't drive the Cows home to be milked for the Bull—he has twice hunted Grace and me into fits, and kept my poor mother a whole morning in the pigstye. As I know you like country delicacies, you will

THE PUGSLEY PAPERS

receive a pound of my fresh butter when it comes, and I mean to add a cheese as soon as I can get one to stick together. I shall send also some family pork for Governor, of my own killing, as we wring a pig's neck on Saturday. I did hope to give you the unexpected treat of a home-made loaf but it was forgot in the oven from ten to six, and is too black to offer. However, I hope to surprise you with one by Monday's carrier. Anastasia bids me add she will send a nosegay for respected Mrs. Tombleson, if the plants don't die off before, which I am sorry to say is not improbable.

It's really shocking to see the failure of her cultivated taste, and one in particular, that must be owned a very pretty idea. When we came, there was a vast number of flower roots, but jumbled without any regular order, till Anastasia trowelled them all up, and set them in again, in the quadrille figures. It must have looked sweetly elegant, if it had agreed with them, but they have all dwindled and drooped like deep declines and consumption. Her dahlias and tulips, too, have turned out nothing but onions and kidney potatoes, and her ten weeks stocks have not come up in twenty. But as Shakespeare says, Adversity is a precious toad—that teaches us Patience is a jewel.

Considering the unsettled state of coming in, I must conclude, but could not resist giving your friendliness a short account of the happy change that has occurred and our increase of comforts. I would write more, but I know you will excuse my listening to the calls of dumb animals. It's the time I always scald the little pigs' bread and milks, and put saucers of clean water for the ducks and geese. There are the fowls' beds to make

with fresh straw, and a hundred similar things that country people are obliged to think of.

The children, I am happy to say, are all well, only baby is a little fractious, we think from Grace setting him down in the nettles, and he was short-coated last week. Grace is poorly with cold, and Anastasia has got a sore throat, from sitting up fruitlessly in the orchard to hear the nightingale; perhaps there may not be any in the Fens. I seem to have a trifling ague and rheumatism myself, but it may be only a stiffness from so much churning, and the great family wash-up of everything we had directly we came down, for the sake of grass-bleaching on the lawn. With these exceptions, we are all in perfect health and happiness and unite in love, with

Dear Miss Jemima's affectionate friend,

DOROTHY PUGSLEY.

*Letter III—From Mrs. Pugsley to Mrs. Mumford,
Bucklersbury.*

MY DEAR MARTHA,

In my ultimatum I informed of old Wrigglesworth paying his natural debts, and of the whole Middlefen estate coming from Lincolnshire to Barbican. I charged Mr. P. to send bulletins into you with progressive reports but between sisters, as I know you are very curious, I am going to make myself more particular. I take the opportunity of the family being all restive in bed, and the house all still, to give an account of our moving. The things all got here safe, with the exception of the Crockery and Glass which came down with the dresser, about an hour after its arrival. Perhaps if we had not

THE PUGSLEY PAPERS

overloaded it with the whole of our breakables it wouldn't have given way—as it is, we have only one plate left, and that's chip'd, and a mug without a spout to keep it in countenance. Our furniture, etc., came by the waggon, and I am sorry to say a poor family at the same time, and the little idle boys with their knives have carved and scarified my rosewood legs, and, what is worse, not of the same patterns; but as people say, two Lincolnshire removes are as bad as a fire of London.

The first thing I did on coming down, was to see to the sweeps going up,—but I wish I had been less precipitous, for the sootty wretches stole four good flitches of bacon, as was up the kitchen chimbley, quite unbeknown to me. We have filled up the vacancy with more, which smoke us dreadfully, but what is to be cured must be endured. My next thing was to have all holes and corners cleared out, and washed and scrubbed, being left, like bachelor's places, in a sad state by old single W.; for a rich man, I never saw one that wanted so much cleaning out. There were heaps of dung about, as high as haystacks, and it cost me five shillings a load to have it all carted off the premises; besides heaps of good-for-nothing littering straw, that I gave to the boys for bonfires. We are not all to rights yet, but Rome wasn't built in St. Thomas' Day.

It was providential I hampered myself with cold provisions, for except the bacon there were no eatables in the house. What old W. lived upon is a mystery, except salads, for we found a whole field of beetroot, which, all but a few plants for Dorothy to pickle, I had chucked away. As the ground was then clear for sowing up a crop, I directed George to plough it up, but he met with

agricultural distress. He says as soon as he whipped his horses, the plough stuck its nose in the earth, and tumbled over head and heels. It seems very odd when ploughing is so easy to look at, but I trust he will do better in time. Experience makes a King Solomon of a Tom Noddy.

I expect we shall have bushels upon bushels of corn, though sadly pecked by the birds, as I have had all the scarecrows taken down for fear of the children dreaming of them for Bogies. For the same dear little sakes I have had the well filled up, and the nasty sharp iron spikes drawn out of all the rakes and harrows. Nobody shall say to my teeth I am not a good mother. With these precautions I trust the young ones will enjoy the country when the gipsies have left, but till then, I confine them to round the house, as it's no use shutting the stable door after you've had a child stole.

We have a good many fine fields of hay, which I mean to have reaped directly, wet or shine; for delays are as dangerous as pickles in glazed pans. Perhaps St. Swithin's is in our favour, for if the stacks are put up dampish they won't catch fire so easily. The poor boys have made themselves very industrious in shooting of the birds, and hunting away all the vermin, besides cutting down trees. As I knew it was profitable to fell timber, I directed them to begin with a very ugly straggling old tree next the premises, but it fell the wrong way and knocked down the cowhouse. Luckily the poor animals were all in the clover-field at the time. George says it wouldn't have happened but for a violent sow, or rather sow-west—and it's likely enough, but it's an ill wind that blows nothing to nobody.

THE PUGSLEY PAPERS

Having writ last post to Mr. P. I have no occasion to make you a country commissioner. Anastasia, indeed wants to have books about everything, but for my part and Dorothy's we don't put much faith in authorized receipts and directions, but trust more to nature and common-sense. For instance, in fattening a goose, reason points to sage and onions,—why our own don't thrive on it, is very mysterious. We have a beautiful poultry-yard, only infested with rats—but I have made up a poison, that, I know by the poor ducks, will kill them if they eat it.

I expected to send you a quantity of wall-fruit, for preserving, and am sorry you bought the brandy beforehand, as it has all vanished in one night by picking and stealing, notwithstanding I had ten dozen of bottles broke on purpose to stick-a-top of the wall. But I rather think they came over the pales, as George, who is very thoughtless, had driven in all the new tenter-hooks with the points downwards. Our apples and pears would have gone too, but luckily we heard a noise in the dark and threw brick-bats out of window, that alarmed the thieves by smashing the cucumber frames. However, I mean on Monday to make sure of the orchard, by gathering the trees,—a pheasant in one's hand is worth two cock sparrows in the bush. One comfort is, the house-dog is very vicious, and won't let any of us stir in or out after dark—indeed, nothing can be more furious, except the bull, and at me in particular. You would think he knew my inward thoughts, and that I intend to have him roasted whole when we give our grand housewarming regalia.

With these particulars, I remain, with the love, my dear Dorcas, your affectionate sister

BELINDA PUGSLEY.

P. S. I have only one anxiety here, and that is, the likelihood of being taken violently ill, nine miles off from any physical powers, with nobody that can ride in the house, and nothing but an insurmountable hunting horse in the stable. I should like, therefore, to be well doctor-stuff'd from Apothecaries' Hall, by the waggon or any other vehicle. A stitch in the side taken in time saves nine spasms. Dorothy's tincture of rhubarb stalks in the garden, doesn't answer, and it's a pity now they were not saved for pies.

Letter IV—From Mrs. Pugsley to Mrs. Rogers

MADAM,

Although warmth has made a coolness, and our having words has caused a silence—yet as mere writing is not being on speaking terms, and disconsolate parents in the case; I waive venting of animosities till a more agreeable moment. Having perused the afflicted advertisement in the *Times*, with interesting description of person and ineffectual dragging of New River,—beg leave to say that Master Robert is safe and well,—having arrived here on Saturday night last, with almost not a shoe to his foot, and no coat at all, as was supposed to be with the approbation of parents. It appears, that not supposing the distance between the families extended to him, he walked the whole way down on the footing of a friend, to visit my son Richard, but hearing the newspapers read, quitted suddenly, the same day with the gipsies, and we haven't an idea what is become of him. Trusting this statement will relieve of all anxiety, remain, Madam, your humble
 Servant,

BELINDA PUGSLEY.

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*Letter V—To Mr. Silas Pugsley, Parisian Depot,
Shoreditch*

DEAR BROTHER,

My favour of the present date, is to advise of my safe arrival on Wednesday night, per opposition coach, after ninety miles of discomfort, absolutely unrivalled for cheapness and a walk of five miles more, through lanes and roads, that for dirt and sludge, may confidently defy competition—not to mention turnings and windings, too numerous to particularize, but morally impossible to pursue on undeviating principles. The night was of so dark a quality as forbade finding the gate, but for the house-dog flying upon me by mistake for the late respectable proprietor, and almost tearing my clothes off my back by his strenuous efforts to obtain the favour of my patronage.

Conscientiously averse to the fallacious statements, so much indulged in by various competitors, truth urges to acknowledge that on arrival, I did not find things on such a footing as to ensure universal satisfaction. Mrs. P., indeed, differs in her statement, but you know her success always surpassed the most sanguine expectations. Ever emulous to merit commendation by the strictest regard to principles of economy, I found her laid up with lumbago, through her studious efforts to please and Doctor Clarke of Wisbeach in the house prescribing for it, but I am sorry to add no abatement. Dorothy is also confined to her bed, by her unremitting attention in the housekeeping line, and Anastasia the same, from listening for nightingales, on a fine July evening, but which is an article not always to be warranted to keep its

virtue in any climate,—the other children, large and small sizes, ditto, ditto, with Grace too ill to serve in the nursery,—and the rest of the servants totally unable to execute such extensive demands. Such an unprecedented depreciation in health makes me doubt the quality of country air, so much recommended for family use, and whether constitutions have not more eligibility to offer that have been regularly town-made.

Our new residence is a large lonely Mansion, with no connexion with any other House, but standing in the heart of Lincolnshire fens, over which it looks through an advantageous opening; comprising a great variety of wind-mills, and drains, and willow-pollards, and an extensive assortment of similar articles, that are not much calculated to invite inspection. In warehouses for corn, etc., it probably presents unusual advantages to the occupier, but candour compels to state that agriculture in this part of Lincolnshire is very flat. To supply language on the most moderate terms, unexampled distress in Spitalfields is nothing to the distress in ours. The corn has been deluged with rain of remarkable durability, without being able to wash the smut out of its ears; and with regard to the expected great rise in hay, our stacks have been burnt down to the ground, instead of going to the consumer. If the hounds hadn't been out we might have fetched the engines; but the hunter threw George on his head, and he only revived to be sensible that the entire stock had been disposed of at an immense sacrifice. The whole amount, I fear, will be out of book,—as the Norwich Union refuses to liquidate the hay, on the ground that the policy was voided by the impolicy of putting it up wet. In other articles I am sorry I must write no

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alteration. Our bull, after killing the house-dog, and tossing William, has gone wild, and had the madness to run away from his livelihood, and, what is worse, all the cows after him—except those that had burst themselves in the clover-field, and a small dividend, as I may say, of one in the pound. Another item, the pigs, to save bread and milk, have been turned into the woods for acorns, and is an article producing no returns—as not one has yet come back. Poultry ditto. Sedulously cultivating an enlarged connexion in the Turkey line, such the antipathy to gipsies, the whole brood, geese and ducks inclusive, removed themselves from the premises by night, directly a strolling camp came and set up in the neighbourhood. To avoid prolixity, when I came to take stock, there was no stock to take—namely, no eggs, no butter, no cheese, no corn, no hay, no bread, no beer—no water even—nothing but the mere commodious premises and fixtures, and goodwill—and candour compels to add, a very small quantity on hand of the last-named particular.

Neither of my two sons in the business nor the two apprentices have been so diligently punctual in executing country orders with despatch and fidelity, as laudable ambition desires, but have gone about fishing and shooting—and William has suffered a loss of three fingers by his unvarying system of high charges. He and Richard are likewise both threatened with prosecution for trespassing on the Hares on the adjoining landed interest, and Nick is obliged to decline any active interest, by dislocating his shoulder in climbing a tall tree for a tom-tit. Between ourselves, the objects of unceasing endeavours, united with uncompromising integrity, have been assailed with so much deterioration, as makes me humbly desirous of

abridging sufferings, by resuming business as a Shoe Maker at the old established house. If Clack and Son, therefore, have not already taken possession and respectfully informed the vicinity, will thankfully pay reasonable compensation for loss of time and expense incurred by the bargain being off. In case parties agree, I beg you will authorize Mr. Robbins to dispose of the whole Lincolnshire concern, though the knocking down of Middlefen Hall will be a severe blow on Mrs. P. and Family.

Circumstances being rendered awkward by the running away of the cattle, etc., it will be best to say—"The Stock to be taken as it stands";—and an additional favour will be politely conferred, if the autioneer will be so kind as to bring the next market town ten miles nearer, and carry the coach and the wagon once a day past the door. Earnestly requesting early attention to the above, and with sentiments of, etc.,

R. PUGSLEY, Sen:

P.S. Richard is just come to hand, dripping and half dead out of the Nene, and the two apprentices all but drowned each other in saving him. Hence occurs to add, fishing opportunities among the desirable items.

THE KNIGHT OF KERRY AND BILLY McCABE

By CHARLES LEVER

“**Y**OU know the story of the Knight of Kerry and Billy McCabe?” said O’Leary.

“I fear I must confess my ignorance—I have never heard of it.”

“Lord bless us, how strange that is! I thought he was better known than the Duke of Wellington or the travelling piper. Well, I must tell you the story, for it has a moral, too—indeed, several morals; but you’ll find that out for yourself. Well, it seems that one day the Knight of Kerry was walking along the Strand in London, killing an hour’s time, till the House was done prayers, and Hume tired of hearing himself speaking; his eye was caught by an enormous picture displayed upon the wall of a house, representing a human figure covered with long, dark hair, with huge nails upon his hands and a most fearful expression of face. On coming nearer, he heard a man with a scarlet livery and cocked hat call out, ‘Walk in, ladies and gentlemen—the most wonderful curiosity ever exhibited—only one shilling—the vild man from Chippooowango, in Africay—eats raw wittles without being cooked, and many other surprising and pleasing performances.’

"The Knight paid his money and was admitted. At first the crowd prevented his seeing anything—for the place was full to suffocation, and the noise awful—for, besides the exclamations and applause of the audience there were three barrel-organs, playing 'Home Sweet Home!' and 'Cherry Ripe,' and the wild man himself contributed his share to the uproar. At last, the Knight obtained, by dint of squeezing and some pushing, a place in the front, when, to his very great horror, he beheld a figure that far eclipsed the portrait without doors.

"It was a man nearly naked, covered with long, shaggy hair, that grew even over his nose and cheek-bones. He sprang about, sometimes on his feet, sometimes all-fours, but always uttering the most fearful yells, and glaring upon the crowd in a manner that was really dangerous. The Knight did not feel exactly happy at the whole proceeding, and began heartily to wish himself back in the 'House,' even upon a committee of privileges, when, suddenly, the savage gave a more frantic scream than before, and seized upon a morsel of raw beef, which a keeper extended to him upon a long fork, like a tandem whip—he was not safe, it appears, at close quarters;—this he tore to pieces eagerly, and devoured in the most voracious manner, amid great clapping of hands, and other evidences of satisfaction from the audience. 'I'll go, now,' thought the Knight, 'for God knows whether, in his hungry moods, he might not fancy to conclude his dinner by a member of Parliament.' Just at this instant, some sounds struck upon his ear that surprised him not a little. He listened more attentively and conceive, if you can, his amazement to find that, amid his most fearful cries and wild yells, the savage was talking Irish. Laugh if you

THE KNIGHT OF KERRY AND BILLY McCABE

like, but it's truth I'm telling you—nothing less than Irish. There he was, jumping four feet high in the air, eating his raw meat, pulling out his hair by handfuls, and, amid all this, cursing the whole company to his heart's content, in as good Irish as ever was heard in Tralee. Now, though the Knight had heard of red Jews and white Negroes, he had never happened to read any account of an African Irishman; so he listened very closely, and by degrees, not only the words were known to him, but the very voice was familiar. At length, something he heard left no further doubt upon his mind, and turning to the savage, he addressed him in Irish, at the same time fixing a look of most scrutinising import upon him.

“‘Who are you, you scoundrel?’ said the Knight.

“‘Billy McCabe, your honour.’

“‘And what do you mean by playing off these tricks here, instead of earning your bread like an honest man?’

“‘Whisht!’ said Billy, ‘and keep the secret. I’m earning the rent for your honour. One must do many a queer thing that pays two pound ten an acre for bad land.’

“This was enough: the Knight wished Billy every success, and left him amid the vociferous applause of a well-satisfied audience. This adventure, it seems, has made the worthy Knight a good friend to the introduction of poor laws; for he remarks very truly ‘more of Billy’s countrymen might take a fancy to a savage life if the secret were found out.’”

IN BORROWED PLUMES

By W. W. JACOBS

THE master of the *Sarah Jane* had been missing for two days, and all on board, with the exception of the boy, whom nobody troubled about, were full of joy at the circumstance. Twice before had the skipper, whose habits might, perhaps, be best described as irregular, missed his ship, and word had gone forth that the third time would be the last. His berth was a good one, and the mate wanted it in place of his own, which was wanted by Ted Jones, A.B.

"Two hours more," said the mate anxiously to the men, as they stood leaning against the side, "and I take the ship out."

"Under two hours'll do it," said Ted, peering over the side and watching the water as it slowly rose over the mud. "What's got the old man, I wonder?"

"I don't know and I don't care," said the mate. "You chaps stand by me and it'll be good for all of us. Mr. Pearson said distinct the last time that if the skipper ever missed his ship again it would be his last trip in her, and he told me afore the old man that I wasn't to wait two minutes at any time, but to bring her out right away."

"He's an old fool," said Bill Loch, the other hand;

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IN BORROWED PLUMES

"and nobody'll miss him but the boy, and he's been looking reg'lar worried all the morning. He looked so worried at dinner time that I give 'im a kick to cheer him up a bit. Look at him now."

The mate gave a supercilious glance in the direction of the boy, and then turned away. The boy, who had no idea of courting observation, stowed himself away behind the windlass; and, taking a letter from his pocket, perused it for the fourth time.

"Dear Tommy," it began. "I take my pen in, and to inform you that Ime stayin here & can't get away for the reason that I lorst my cloes at cribage larst night, also my money, & everything beside. Don't speak to a living sole about it as the mate wants my birth, but pack up sum cloes & bring them to me without saying nuthing to noboddy. The mates cloes wil do becos I haven't got enny other soot, don't tell im. You needent trouble about soks as I've got them left. My hed is so bad I must now conclude. Your affecshunate uncle & captin Joe Bross. P. S. Don't let the mate see you come or else he won't let you go."

"Two hours more," sighed Tommy, as he put the letter back in his pocket. "How can I get any clothes when they're all locked up? And aunt said I was to look after 'im and see he didn't get into no mischief."

He sat thinking deeply, and then, as the crew of the *Sarah Jane* stepped ashore to take advantage of a glass offered by the mate, he crept down to the cabin again for another desperate look round. The only articles of clothing visible belonged to Mrs. Bross, who up to this trip had been sailing in the schooner to look after its master. At these he gazed hard.

"I'll take 'em and try an' swop 'em for some men's clothes," said he suddenly, snatching the garments from the pegs. "She wouldn't mind"; and hastily rolling them into a parcel, together with a pair of carpet slippers of the captain's, he thrust the lot into an old biscuit bag. Then he shouldered his burden, and, going cautiously on deck, gained the shore, and set off at a trot to the address furnished in the letter.

It was a long way, and the bag was heavy. His first attempt at barter was alarming, for the pawnbroker, who had just been cautioned by the police, was in such a severe and uncomfortable state of morals, that the boy quickly snatched up his bundle again and left. Sorely troubled he walked hastily along, until, in a small bye street, his glance fell on a baker of mild and benevolent aspect, standing behind the counter of his shop.

"If you please, sir," said Tommy, entering, and depositing his bag on the counter, "have you got any cast-off clothes you don't want?"

The baker turned to a shelf, and selecting a stale loaf cut it in halves, one of which he placed before the boy.

"I don't want bread," said Tommy desperately; "but mother has just died, and father wants mourning for the funeral. He's only got a new suit with him, and if he can change these things of mother's for an old suit, he'd sell his best ones to bury her with."

He shook the articles out on the counter, and the baker's wife, who had just come into the shop, inspected them rather favourably.

"Poor boy, so you've lost your mother," she said, turning the clothes over. "It's a good skirt, Bill."

"Yes, ma'am," said Tommy dolefully.

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"What did she die of?" inquired the baker.

"Scarlet fever," said Tommy, tearfully, mentioning the only disease he knew.

"Scar—take them things away," yelled the baker, pushing the clothes on to the floor, and following his wife to the other end of the shop. "Take 'em away directly, you young villain."

His voice was so loud, his manner so imperative, that the startled boy, without stopping to argue, stuffed the clothes pell-mell into the bag again and departed. A farewell glance at the clock made him look almost as horrified as the baker.

"There's no time to be lost," he muttered, as he began to run; "either the old man'll have to come in these or else stay where he is."

He reached the house breathless, and paused before an unshaven man in time-worn greasy clothes, who was smoking a short clay pipe with much enjoyment in front of the door.

"Is Cap'n Bross here?" he panted.

"He's upstairs," said the man, with a leer, "sitting in sackcloth and ashes, more ashes than sackcloth. Have you got some clothes for him?"

"Look here," said Tommy. He was down on his knees with the mouth of the bag open again, quite in the style of the practised hawker. "Give me an old suit of clothes for them. Hurry up. There's a lovely frock."

"Blimey," said the man, staring. "I've only got these clothes. Wot d'yer take me for? A dook?"

"Well, get me some somewhere," said Tommy. "If you don't the cap'n'll have to come in these, and I'm sure he won't like it."

"I wonder what he'd look like," said the man, with a grin. "Damme if I don't come up and see."

"Get me some clothes," pleaded Tommy.

"I wouldn't get yer clothes, no, not for fifty pun," said the man severely. "Wot d'yer mean wanting to spoil people's pleasure in that way? Come on, come and tell the cap'n what you've got for 'im, I want to 'ear what he ses. He's been swearing 'ard since ten o'clock this morning, but he ought to say something special over this."

He led the way up the bare wooden stairs, followed by the harassed boy, and entered a small dirty room at the top, in the centre of which the master of the *Sarah Jane* sat to deny visitors, in a pair of socks and last week's paper.

"Here's a young gent come to bring you some clothes, cap'n," said the man, taking the sack from the boy.

"Why didn't you come before?" growled the captain, who was reading the advertisements.

The man put his hand in the sack, and pulled out the clothes. "What do you think of 'em?" he asked expectantly.

The captain strove vainly to tell him, but his tongue mercifully forsook its office, and dried between his lips. His brain rang with sentences of scorching iniquity, but they got no further.

"Well, say thank you, if you can't say nothing else," suggested his tormentor hopefully.

"I couldn't bring nothing else," said Tommy hurriedly; "all the things was locked up. I tried to swop 'em and nearly got locked up for it. Put these on and hurry up."

The captain moistened his lips with his tongue.

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"The mate'll get off directly she floats," continued Tommy. "Put these on and spoil his little game. It's raining a little now. Nobody'll see you, and as soon as you git aboard you can borrow some of the men's clothes."

"That's the ticket, cap'n," said the man. "Lord lumme, you'll 'ave everybody falling in love with you."

"Hurry up," said Tommy, dancing with impatience. "Hurry up."

The skipper, dazed and wild-eyed, stood still while his two assistants hastily dressed him, bickering somewhat about details as they did so.

"He ought to be tight-laced, I tell you," said the man.

"He can't be tight-laced without stays," said Tommy scornfully. "You ought to know that."

"Ho, can't he," said the other, discomfited. "You know too much for a young-un. Well, put a bit o' line round 'im then."

"We can't wait for a line," said Tommy, who was standing on tip-toe to tie the skipper's bonnet on. "Now tie the scarf over his chin to hide his beard, and put this veil on. It's a good job he ain't got a moustache."

The other complied and then fell back a pace or two to gaze at his handiwork. "Strewth, though I ses it as shouldn't, you look a treat!" he remarked complacently. "Now, young-un, take 'old of his arm. Go up the back streets, and if you see anybody looking at you, call 'im Mar."

The two set off, after the man, who was a born realist, had tried to snatch a kiss from the skipper on the threshold. Fortunately for the success of the venture, it was pelting with rain, and, though a few people gazed

curiously at the couple as they went hastily along, they were unmolested, and gained the wharf in safety, arriving just in time to see the schooner shoving off from the side.

At the sight the skipper held up his skirts and ran. "Ahoy!" he shouted. "Wait a minute."

The mate gave one look of blank astonishment at the extraordinary figure, and then turned away; but at that moment the stern came within jumping distance of the wharf, and uncle and nephew, moved with one impulse, leaped for it and gained the deck in safety.

"Why didn't you wait when I hailed you?" demanded the skipper fiercely.

"How was I to know it was you?" inquired the mate surlily, as he realized his defeat. "I thought it was the Empress of Rooshia."

The skipper stared at him dumbly.

"An' if you take my advice," said the mate, with a sneer, "you'll keep them things on. *I* never see you look so well in anything afore."

"I want to borrow some o' your clothes, Bob," said the skipper, eyeing him steadily.

"Where's your own?" asked the other.

"I don't know," said the skipper. "I was took with a fit last night, Bob, and when I woke up this morning they were gone. Somebody must have took advantage of my helpless state and taken 'em."

"Very likely," said the mate, turning away to shout an order to the crew, who were busy setting sail.

"Where are they, old man?" inquired the skipper.

"How should I know?" asked the other, becoming interested in the men again.

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"I mean *your* clothes," said the skipper, who was fast losing his temper.

"Oh, mine?" said the mate. "Well, as a matter o' fact, I don't like lending my clothes. I'm rather per-tickler. You might have a fit in *them*."

"You won't lend 'em to me?" asked the skipper.

"I won't," said the mate, speaking loudly, and frowning significantly at the crew, who were listening.

"Very good," said the skipper. "Ted, come here. Where's your other clothes?"

"I'm very sorry, sir," said Ted, shifting uneasily from one leg to the other, and glancing at the mate for support; "but they ain't fit for the likes of you to wear, sir."

"I'm the best judge of that," said the skipper sharply. "Fetch 'em up."

"Well, to tell the truth, sir," said Ted, "I'm like the mate. I'm only a poor sailorman, but I wouldn't lend my clothes to the Queen of England."

"You fetch up them clothes," roared the skipper, snatching off his bonnet and flinging it on the deck. "Fetch 'em up at once. D'ye think I am going about in these petticoats?"

"They're my clothes," muttered Ted doggedly.

"Very well, then, I'll have Bill's," said the skipper. "But mind you, my lad, I'll make you pay for this afore I've done with you. Bill's the only honest man aboard this ship. Gimme your hand, Bill, old man."

"I'm with them two," said Bill gruffly, as he turned away.

The skipper, biting his lips with fury, turned from one to the other, and then, with a big oath, walked forward. Before he could reach the fo'c'sle Bill and Ted dived

down before him, and, by the time he had descended, sat on their chests side by side confronting him. To threats and appeals alike they turned a deaf ear, and the frantic skipper was compelled at last to go on deck again, still encumbered with the hated skirts.

"Why don't you go and lay down," said the mate, "an' I'll send you down a nice cup o' hot tea. You'll get histericks, if you go on like that."

"I'll knock your 'ead off if you talk to me," said the skipper.

"Not you," said the mate cheerfully; "you ain't big enough. Look at that pore fellow over there."

The skipper looked in the direction indicated, and, swelling with impotent rage, shook his fist fiercely at a red-faced man with grey whiskers, who was wafting innumerable tender kisses from the bridge of a passing steamer.

"That's right," said the mate approvingly; "don't give 'im no encouragement. Love at first sight ain't worth having."

The skipper, suffering severely from suppressed emotion, went below, and the crew, after waiting a little while to make sure that he was not coming up again, made their way quietly to the mate.

"If you can only take him to Battlesea in this rig it'll be all right," said the latter. "You chaps stand by me. His slippers and sou'wester is the only clothes he's got aboard. Chuck every needle you can lay your hands on overboard or else he'll git trying to make a suit out of a piece of old sail or something. If we can only take him to Mr. Pearson like this, it won't be so bad after all."

While these arrangements were in hand above, the

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skipper and the boy were busy over others below. Various startling schemes propounded by the skipper for obtaining possession of his men's attire were rejected by the youth as unlawful, and, what was worse, impracticable. For a couple of hours they discussed ways and means, but only ended in diatribes against the mean ways of the crew; and the skipper, whose head ached still from his excesses, fell into a state of sullen despair at length, and sat silent.

"By Jove, Tommy, I've got it," he cried suddenly, starting up and hitting the table with his fist. "Where's your other suit?"

"That ain't no bigger than this one," said Tommy.

"You git it out," said the skipper, with a knowing toss of his head. "Ah, there we are. Now go in my stateroom and take those off."

The wondering Tommy, who thought that great grief had turned his kinsman's brain, complied, and emerged shortly afterwards in a blanket, bringing his clothes under his arm.

"Now, do you know what I'm going to do?" inquired the skipper, with a big smile.

"No."

"Fetch me the scissors, then. Now do you know what I'm going to do?"

"Cut up the two suits and make 'em into one," hazarded the horror-stricken Tommy. "Here, stop it! Leave off!"

The skipper pushed him impatiently off, and placing the clothes on the table, took up the scissors, and, with a few slashing strokes, cut the garments into their component parts.

"What am *I* to wear?" said Tommy, beginning to blubber. "You didn't think of that!"

"What are you to wear, you selfish young pig?" said the skipper sternly. "Always thinking about yourself. Go and git some needles to thread, and if there's any left over, and you're a good boy, I'll see whether I can't make something for you out of the leavings."

"There ain't no needles here," whined Tommy, after a lengthened search.

"Go down the fo'c'sle and git the case of sail-makers' needles, then," said the skipper. "Don't let any one see what you're after, an' some thread."

"Well, why couldn't you let me go in my clothes before you cut 'em up," moaned Tommy. "I don't like going up in this blanket. They'll laugh at me."

"You go at once!" thundered the skipper, and, turning his back on him, whistled softly, and began to arrange the pieces of cloth.

"Laugh away, my lads," he said cheerfully, as an uproarious burst of laughter greeted the appearance of Tommy on deck. "Wait a bit."

He waited himself for nearly twenty minutes, at the end of which time Tommy, treading on his blanket, came flying down the companion ladder, and rolled into the cabin.

"There ain't a needle aboard the ship," he said solemnly, as he picked himself up and rubbed his head. "I've looked everywhere."

"What?" roared the skipper, hastily concealing the pieces of cloth. "Here, Ted! Ted!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" said Ted, as he came below.

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"I want a sail-maker's needle," said the skipper glibly. "I've got a rent in this skirt."

"I broke the last one yesterday," said Ted, with an evil grin.

"Any other needle then," said the skipper, trying to conceal his emotion.

"I don't believe there's such a thing aboard the ship," said Ted, who had obeyed the mate's thoughtful injunction "*nor* thread. I was only saying so to the mate yesterday."

The skipper sank again to the lowest depths, waved him away, and then, getting on a corner of the locker, fell into a gloomy reverie.

"It's a pity you do things in such a hurry," said Tommy, sniffing vindictively. "You might have made sure of the needle before you spoiled my clothes. There's two of us going about ridiculous now."

The master of the *Sarah Jane* allowed this insolence to pass unheeded. It is in moments of deep distress that the mind of man, naturally reverting to solemn things, seeks to improve the occasion by a lecture. The skipper, chastened by suffering and disappointment, stuck his right hand in his pocket, after a lengthened search for it, and gently bidding the blanketed urchin in front of him to sit down, began:

"You see what comes of drink and cards," he said mournfully. "Instead of being at the helm of my ship, racing all the other craft down the river, I'm skulkin' down below here like—like——"

"Like an actress," suggested Tommy.

The skipper eyed him all over. Tommy, unconscious of offence, met his gaze serenely.

"If," continued the skipper, "at any time you felt like taking too much, and you stopped with the beer-mug halfway to your lips, and thought of me sitting in this disgraceful state, what would you do?"

"I dunno," replied Tommy, yawning.

"What would you do?" persisted the skipper, with great expression.

"Laugh, I s'pose," said Tommy, after a moment's thought.

The sound of a well-boxed ear rang through the cabin.

"You're an unnatural, ungrateful little toad," said the skipper fiercely. "You don't deserve to have a good, kind uncle to look after you."

"Anybody can have him for me," sobbed the indignant Tommy, as he tenderly felt his ear. "You look a precious sight more like an aunt than an uncle."

After firing this shot he vanished in a cloud of blanket, and the skipper, reluctantly abandoning a hastily formed resolve of first flaying him alive and then flinging him overboard, sat down again and lit his pipe.

Once out of the river he came on deck again, and, ignoring by a great effort the smiles of the crew and the jibes of the mate, took command. The only alteration he made in his dress was to substitute his sou'wester for the bonnet, and in this guise he did his work while the aggrieved Tommy hopped it in blankets. The three days at sea passed like a horrid dream. So covetous was his gaze, that the crew instinctively clutched their nether garments and looked to the buttoning of their coats as they passed him. He saw coats in the mainsail, and fashioned phantom trousers out of the flying jib, and towards the end began to babble of blue serges and mixed

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tweeds. Oblivious of fame, he had resolved to enter the harbour of Battlesea by night; but it was not to be. Near home the wind dropped, and the sun was well up before Battlesea came into view, a grey bank on the star-board bow.

Until within a mile of the harbour, the skipper held on, and then his grasp on the wheel relaxed somewhat, and he looked round anxiously for the mate.

"Where's Bob?" he shouted.

"He's very ill, sir," said Ted, shaking his head.

"Ill?" gasped the startled skipper. "Here, take the wheel a minute."

He handed it over, and grasping his skirts, went hastily below. The mate was half lying, half sitting, in his bunk, groaning dismally.

"What's the matter?" inquired the skipper.

"I'm dying," said the mate. "I keep being tied up all in knots inside. I can't hold myself straight."

The other cleared his throat. "You'd better take off your clothes and lie down a bit," he said kindly. "Let me help you off with them."

"No—don't—trouble," panted the mate.

"It ain't no trouble," panted the skipper, in a trembling voice.

"No, I'll keep 'em on," said the mate faintly. "I've always had an idea I'd like to die in my clothes. It may be foolish, but I can't help it."

"You'll have your wish some day, never fear, you infernal rascal," shouted the overwrought skipper. "You're shamming sickness to make me take the ship into port."

"Why shouldn't you take her in," said the mate, with

an air of innocent surprise. "It's your duty as cap'n. You'd better get above now. The bar is always shifting."

The skipper, restraining himself by a mighty effort, went on deck again, and, taking the wheel, addressed the crew. He spoke feelingly of the obedience men owed their superior officers, and the moral obligation they were under to lend them their trousers when they required them. He dwelt on the awful punishments awarded for mutiny, and proved clearly, that to allow the master of a ship to enter port in petticoats was mutiny of the worst type. He then sent them below for their clothing. They were gone such a long time that it was palpable to the meanest intellect that they did not intend to bring it. Meantime the harbour widened out before him.

There were two or three people on the quay as the *Sarah Jane* came within hailing distance. By the time she had passed the lanthorn at the end of it there were two or three dozen, and the numbers were steadily increasing at the rate of three persons for every five yards she made. Kind-hearted, humane men, anxious that their friends should not lose so great and cheap a treat, bribed small and reluctant boys with pennies to go in search of them, and by the time the schooner reached her berth, a large proportion of the population of the port was looking over each other's shoulders and shouting foolish and hilarious inquiries to the skipper. The news reached the owner, and he came hurrying down to the ship, just as the skipper, regardless of the heated remonstrances of the sightseers, was preparing to go below.

Mr. Pearson was a stout man, and he came down exploding with wrath. Then he saw the apparition, and mirth overcame him. It became necessary for three stout

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fellows to act as buttresses, and the more indignant the skipper looked, the harder their work became. Finally he was assisted, in a weak state, and laughing hysterically, to the deck of the schooner, where he followed the skipper below, and in a voice broken with emotion demanded an explanation.

"It's the finest sight I ever saw in my life, Bross," he said when the other had finished. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything. I've been feeling very low this last week, and it's done me good. Don't talk nonsense about leaving the ship. I wouldn't lose you for anything after this, but if you like to ship a new mate and crew you can please yourself. If you'll only come up to the house and let Mrs. Pearson see you—she's been ailing—I'll give you a couple of pounds. Now, get your bonnet and come."

AN ADVENTURE IN BED

By STACY AUMONIER

THERE was something essentially Chinese about the appearance of George as he lay there propped up against the pillows. His large flabby face had an expression of complete detachment. His narrowing eyes regarded me with a fatalistic repose. Observing him, I felt that nothing mattered, nothing ever had mattered, and nothing ever would matter. And I was angry. Pale sunlight filtered through the curtains.

"Good Lord!" I exclaimed. "Still in bed! Do you know it's nearly twelve o'clock?"

An almost inaudible sigh greeted my explosion. George occupied the maisonette below me. Some fool of an uncle had left him a small private income, and he lived alone, attended by an old housekeeper. He did nothing, absolutely nothing at all, not even amuse himself, and whenever I went in to see him, he was invariably in bed. There was nothing wrong with his health. It was sheer laziness. Not laziness of a negative kind, mark you, but the outcome of a calm and studied policy. I knew this and it angered me the more.

"What would happen if the whole world went on like you?" I snapped.

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AN ADVENTURE IN BED

He sighed again, and then replied in his thin mellow voice: "We should have a series of ideal states. There would be no wars, no crimes, no divorce, no competition, no greed, envy, hatred or malice."

"Yes, and no food."

He turned slightly on one side. His accents became mildly expostulating, the philosopher fretted by an ignorant child.

"How unreasonable you are, dear boy. How unthinkable! The secret of life is complete immobility. The tortoise lives four hundred years; the fox-terrier wears itself out in ten. Wild beasts, fishes, savages, and stock-brokers fight and struggle and eat each other up. The only place for a cultivated man is—bed. In bed he is supreme—the arbiter of his soul. His limbs and the vulgar carcase of his being constructed for purely material functioning are concealed. His head rules him. He is the autocrat of the bolster, the gallant of fine linen, the master of complete relaxation. Believe me, there are a thousand tender attitudes of repose unknown to people like you. The four corners of a feather-bed are an inexhaustible field of luxurious adventure. I have not spent more than half my life in bed, and even now I have not explored all the delectable crannies and comforts that it holds for me."

"No," I sneered, "and in the meantime other people have to work to keep you there."

"That is not my fault. A well-ordered state should be a vast caravanserai of dormitories. Ninety-nine per cent of these activities you laud so extravagantly are gross and unnecessary. People should be made to stay in bed till they have found out something worth doing. Who

wants telephones, and cinemas, and safety razors? All that civilization has invented are vulgar luxuries and time-saving devices. And when they have saved the time they don't know what to do with it. All that is required is bread, and wine, and fine linen. I—even I would not object to getting up for a few hours every week to help to produce these things."

He stroked the three-weeks' growth on his chin, and smiled magnanimously. Then he continued:

"The world has yet to appreciate the real value of passivity. In a crude form the working-classes have begun to scratch the edge of the surface. They have discovered the strike. Now, observe that the strike is the most powerful political weapon of the present day. It can accomplish nearly everything it requires, and yet it is a condition of immobility. So you see already that immobility may be more powerful than activity. But this is only the beginning. When the nations start going to bed and stopping there, then civilization will take a leap forward. You can do nothing with a man in bed—not even knock him down. My ambition is to form a League of Bedfellows. So that if one day some busy-body or group of busy-bodies says: 'We're going to war with France, or Germany, or America,' we can reply, 'Very well. Then I'm going to bed.' Then, after a time, they would have to go to bed, too. And they would eventually succumb to the gentle caresses of these sheets and eider-downs. All their evil intentions would melt away. The world should be ruled not by Governments or Soviets, but by national doss houses."

He yawned, and I pulled up the blind.

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"What about the good activities?" I replied.

For a moment I thought I had stumped him, or that he was not going to deign to reply. Then the thin rumble of his voice reached me from across the sheets.

"What you call the good activities can all be performed in bed. That is to say, they can be substituted by a good immobility. The activities of man are essentially predatory. He has learnt nothing and forgotten nothing. He is a hunter and slayer and nothing else at all. All his activities are diversions of this instinct. Commerce is war, capital is a sword, labour is a stomach. Progress means either filling the stomach, or chopping some one's head off with the sword. Science is an instrument that speeds up the execution. Politics is a game. Colonization is straightforward daylight burglary."

"I'm not going to waste my morning talking to a fool like you," I said. "But what about art, and beauty, and charity, and love?"

"In bed," he mumbled. "All in bed. . . . They are all spiritual things. Was Keats's 'Ode to a Nightingale' any finer because he got up and wrote it down and sent it off to a fool of a publisher? Charity! Give a man a bed, and charity ceases to have any significance. Love! What a fool you are! Is a bed a less suitable place for love than a County Council tramcar?"

I record this conversation because it will help you to share with me the sense of extreme surprise at certain events which followed, two months later. Of course George did occasionally get up. Sometimes he went for a gentle stroll in the afternoon, and he belonged to a club down town where he would go and dine in the evening. After dinner he would watch some of the men play bil-

liards, but he invariably returned to his bed about ten o'clock. He never played any game himself, neither did he apparently write nor receive letters. Occasionally he read in bed, but he never looked at a newspaper or a magazine.

I ask you, then, to imagine my amazement when, two months later, George shaved himself, got up to breakfast, reached a city office at nine o'clock, worked all day, and returned at seven in the evening. You will no doubt have a shrewd idea of the reason, and you are right. She was the prettiest little thing you can imagine, with chestnut hair and a solemn, babyish pucker of the cheeks. She was as vital as he was turgid. Her name was Maisie Brand. I don't know how he met her, but Maisie, in addition to being pretty and in every way attractive, was a practical modern child. George's two hundred a year might be sufficient to keep him in bed, but it wasn't going to be enough to run a household on. Maisie had no use for this bed theory. She was a daughter of sunshine and fresh air, and frocks, and theatres, and social life. If George was to win her he must get up in the morning.

On the Sunday after this dramatic change I visited him in his bedroom. He was like a broken man. He groaned when he recognised me.

"I suppose you'll stop in bed all day to-day?" I remarked jauntily.

"I've got to get up this afternoon," he growled. "I've got to take her to a concert."

"Well, how do you like work?" I asked.

"It's torture . . . agony, hell. It's awful. Fortunately, I found a fellow-sufferer. He works next to me.

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We take it in turn to have twenty-minute naps, while the other keeps watch."

I laughed, and quoted: "Custom lies upon us with a weight, heavy as frost and deep almost as night."

Then I added venomously: "Well, I haven't any sympathy for you. It serves you right for the way you've gone on all these years."

I thought he was asleep again, but at last his drowsy accents proclaimed: "What a perfect fool you are! You always follow the line of least resistance."

I laughed outright at that, and exclaimed: "Well, if ever there was a case of the pot calling the kettle black!"

There was a long interval, during which I seemed to observe a slow cumbrous movement in the bed. Doubtless he was exploring. When he spoke again, there was a faint tinge of animation in his voice.

"You are not capable, I suppose, of realizing the danger of it all. You fool! Do you think I follow the line of least resistance in bed? Do you think I haven't often wanted to get up and do all those ridiculous things you and your kind indulge in? Can't you see what might happen? Suppose these dormant temptations were thoroughly aroused! Good God! It's awful to contemplate. Habit, you say? Yes, I know quite well the risk I am running. Am I to sacrifice all the epic romance of this life between the sheets for the sordid round of petty actions you call life? I was a fool to get up that day. I had a premonition of danger when I awoke at dawn. I said to myself, 'George, restrain yourself. Do not be deceived by the hollow sunlight. Above all things, keep clear of the park!' But, like a fool, I betrayed my sacred

trust. The premonitions which come to one in bed are always right. I got up. And now. . . . My God! It's too late."

"Well," I said, "if you feel like that about it; if you think more of your bed than of the girl, I should break it off. She won't be missing much."

He suddenly sat up and exclaimed:

"Don't you dare——"

Then he sank back on the pillow, and added dispassionately: "There, you see, already the instinct of activity. A weak attitude. I could crush you more successfully with complete immobility. They shake me at every turn. Nothing is secure."

Inwardly chuckling at his discomfiture, I left him.

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During the months that followed I did not have the opportunities of studying George to the extent that I should have liked, as my work carried me to various parts of the country, but what opportunities I did have I found intriguing. He certainly improved in health. A slight colour tinged his cheeks. He seemed less puffy and turgid. His movements were still slow, but they were more deliberate than of old. His clothes were neat and brushed. The girl was delightful. She came up and chatted with me, and we became great friends. She talked to me quite frankly about George. She laughed about his passion for bed, but declared she meant to knock all that sort of thing out of him. She was going to wake him up thoroughly. She said laughingly that it was perfectly disgusting the way he had been living. I used to try and visualise George making love to her, but

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somehow the picture would never seem convincing. I do not think it was a very passionate affair. Passion was the last thing you would associate with George. I used to watch them walking down the street, the girl slim and vivid, swinging along with broad strides, George, rather flustered and disturbed, pottering along by her side, like a performing bear that is being led away from its bun. He did not appear to look at her, and when she addressed him vivaciously, he bent forward his head and held his large ear close to her head. It was as though he was timid of her vitality.

At first the spectacle amused me, but after a time it produced in me another feeling altogether.

"This girl is being thrown away on him. It's horrible. She's much too good for George."

And when I was away I was constantly thinking of her, and dreading the day of the wedding, praying that something would happen to prevent it. But to my deep concern nothing did happen to prevent it, and they were duly married the following April. They went for a short honeymoon to Brittany, and then returned and occupied George's old maisonette below me. The day after their return I had to face a disturbing realisation. *I was falling hopelessly in love with Maisie myself.* I could not think of George or take any interest in him. I was always thinking of her. Her face haunted me. Her charm and beauty, and the pathos of her position, gripped me. I made up my mind that the only thing to do was to go away. I went to Scotland, and on my return took a small flat in another part of London. I wrote to George and gave him my address, and wished him all possible luck. I said I hoped "some day" to pay them a visit, but

if at any time I could be of service, would he let me know. I cannot describe to you the anguish I experienced during the following twelve months. I saw nothing of George or Maisie at all but the girl was ever present in my thoughts. I could not work. I lived in a state of feverish restlessness. Time and again I was on the point of breaking my resolve, but I managed to keep myself in hand.

It was in the following June that I met Maisie walking down Regent Street. She looked pale and worried. Dark rings encircled her eyes. She gave a little gasp when she saw me, and clutched my hand. I tried to be formal, but she was obviously labouring under some tense emotion.

"My flat is in Baker Street," I said. "Will you come and visit me?"

She answered huskily, "Yes, I will come to-morrow afternoon. Thank you."

She slipped away in the crowd. I spent a sleepless night. What had happened! Of course I could see it all. George had gone back to bed. Having once secured her, his efforts had gradually flagged. He had probably left his business—or been sacked—and spent the day sleeping. The poor girl was probably living a life of loneliness and utter poverty. What was I to do? All day long I paced up and down my flat. I dreaded that she might not come. It was just after four that the bell went. I hastened to answer it myself. It was she. I led her into the sitting-room, and tried to be formal and casual. I made some tea and chatted impersonally about the weather and the news of the day. She hardly answered me. Suddenly she buried her face in her hands,

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and broke into tears. I sprang to her and patted her shoulder.

"There, there," I said. "What is it? Tell me all about it, Maisie."

"I can't live with him! I can't live with him any longer!" she sobbed.

I must acknowledge that my heart gave a violent bump, not entirely occasioned by contrition. I murmured as sympathetically as I could, but with prophetic assurance: "He's gone back to bed."

"Oh, no, no," she managed to stammer. "It's not that. It's just the opposite."

"Just the opposite?"

"He's so restless, so exhausting. Oh, dear! Yes, please, Mr. Wargrave, give me a cup of tea, and I will tell you all about it."

For a moment I wondered whether the poor girl's mental balance had been upset. I poured her out the tea in silence. George restless! George exhausting! Whatever did she mean? She sipped the tea meditatively; then she dabbed her beautiful eyes, and told me the following remarkable story:

"It was all right at first, Mr. Wargrave. We were quite happy. He was still—you know, very lazy, very sleepy. It all came about gradually. Every week, however, he seemed to get a little more active and vital. He began to sleep shorter hours and work longer. He liked to be entertained in the evening or to go to a theatre. On Sunday he would go for quite long walks. It went on like that for months. Then they raised his position in the firm. He seemed to open out. It was as though during all those years he had spent in bed he had been

hoarding up remarkable stores of energy. And suddenly some demon of restlessness got possession of him. He began to work frenziedly. At first he was pleasant to me; then he became so busy he completely ignored me. At the end of six months they made him manager of a big engineering works at Walham Green. One of the directors, a Mr. Sturge, said to me one day, 'That husband of yours is a remarkable man. He is the most efficient and forceful person we have ever employed. What has he been doing all these years? Why haven't we heard of him before?' He would get up at six in the morning, have a cold bath, and study for two hours before he went off to work. He would work all day, like a fury. They say he was a perfect slave-driver in the works. Only last week he sacked a man for taking a nap five minutes over his lunch hour. He would get home about eight o'clock, have a hurried dinner, and then insist on going to the theatres or playing bridge. When we got back he would read till two or three in the morning. Oh, Mr. Wargrave, he has got worse and worse. He never sleeps at all. He terrifies me. On Sunday it is just the same. He works all the morning. After lunch he motors out to Northwood, and plays eighteen holes before tea, and eighteen after."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Golf?"

"Golf, and science, and organisation are his manias. They say he has invented some wonderful labour-saving appliances on the plant, and he's planning all kinds of future activities. The business of the firm is increasing enormously. They pay him well, but he still insists on living in that maisonette. He says he is too busy to move."

"Is he cruel to you?"

"If complete indifference and neglect is cruelty, he is most certainly cruel. Sometimes he gives me a most curious look, as though he hated me, and yet he can't account for me. He allows me no intimacy of any sort. If I plead with him he doesn't answer. I believe he holds me responsible for all these dormant powers which have got loose and which he cannot now control. I do not think his work gives him any satisfaction. It is as if he were driven on by some blind force. Oh, Mr. Wargrave, I can't go on. It is killing me. I must run away and leave him."

"Maisie!" I murmured, and I took her hand.

The immediate subsequent proceedings are not perhaps necessary to record in relating this story, which is essentially George's story. I can only tell you that during that year of her surprising married life, Maisie had thought of me not a little, and this dénouement rapidly brought things to a head. After this confession we used to meet every day. We went for rambles, and picnics, and to matinées, and of course that kind of thing cannot go on indefinitely. We both detested the idea of an intrigue. And eventually we decided that we would cut the Gordian knot and make a full confession. Maisie left him and went to live with a married sister. That same morning I called on George. I arrived at the maisonette just before six o'clock as I knew that was the most likely time to catch him. Without any preliminary ceremony I made my way into the familiar bedroom. George was in bed. I stood by the door and called out:

"George!"

Like a flash he was out of bed, and standing in his

pyjamas, facing me. He had changed considerably. His face was lined and old, but his eyes blazed with a fury of activity. He awed me. I stammered out my confession.

"George, I'm awfully sorry, old chap. I have a confession to make to you. It comes in the first place from Maisie. She has decided that she cannot live with you any longer. She thinks you have neglected her, and treated her badly. She refuses to come back to you under any circumstances. Indeed she—she and I—er——"

I tailed off dismally, and looked at him. For a moment I thought he was going to bear down on me. I know that if he had I should have been supine. I should have stood there and let him slaughter me. I felt completely overpowered by the force of his personality. I believe I shivered. He hovered by the edge of the bed, then he turned and looked out of the window. He stood there solemnly for nearly a minute; then he emitted a profound sigh. Without more ado, he got back into bed. There was an immense upheaval of the sheets. He seemed to be burrowing down into some vast and as yet unexplored cave of comfort. He rolled and heaved, and at length became inert. I stood there, waiting for my answer. Sparrows twittered outside on the window-box. I don't know how long I waited. I felt that I could not go until he had spoken.

At length his voice came. It seemed to reach me across dim centuries of memory, an old, tired, cosy, enormously contented, sleep-encrusted voice.

"'S'all right," said the voice. "Tell Mrs. Chase she needn't bring up my shaving-water this morning."

WHAT GREAT EVENTS

By W. PETT RIDGE

MR. BARDEN, of No. 21 Begonia Road, N.W., discovered, on the narrow gravelled walk of his back garden, a snail making leisurely progress. No permission had been given for it to enter the grounds, and Mr. Barden, finding a superannuated clothes-peg, jerked the snail over the wall. He went on, dismissing the trifling incident from his mind, and smoking a cigar presented to him that day by no less a person than one of his directors. Mr. Barden congratulated himself on the peacefulness of the district. He and Mrs. Barden, agreeing on many subjects, were especially at one on the topic of quiet surroundings.

"Great thing is," Mrs. Barden had said, "not to know your neighbours. Once you get acquainted with them, you can no longer call your house your own."

Mr. Barden had made the tour of the garden three times, when he again encountered a snail. He remarked, in humorous vein, that it had better join its boon companion; the clothes-peg was once more used. On the next turn around the garden something fell upon the rim of his straw hat. Snatching off the headgear, he frowned at the snail, and it then occurred to him—all in a flash, so he described it later to his wife—that there was but

one snail, and that the mollusc was being forced to pay flying visits from one garden to another. Mr. Barden hurled it over the wall, and instantly the head of a lady appeared. He guessed her to be standing on a wheelbarrow.

"I wish to goodness, sir," said the lady, speaking with frank indignation, "that you would be kind enough, if you must keep snails, to keep them to yourself."

Mr. Barden, as gentlemanly a man as you would encounter, in office hours, from one end to the other of Moorgate Street, City, had replaced his straw hat. He now took it off, bowed politely, and went forward with the intention of explaining that his desire was, not so much to keep snails as to get rid of them. At this moment the lady disappeared. He found himself hoping that the wheelbarrow had given way.

Indoors, Mrs. Barden, who had been watching the scene from an upper window, was able to confirm this bright anticipation, and to mention that the neighbour had limped her way back to the house.

Mrs. Barden supplied the information that the lady's name was Dunstan. The maid, it appeared, had heard it rumoured that Miss Dunstan was either a vegetarian or a Unitarian; the maid was not quite sure, but it was certainly something peculiar. "I never dream of taking any notice of her," Mrs. Barden went on, "when I meet her out. And after this I shall be more distant with her than ever."

"I think you're wise, my dear."

A ring came at the front door just as Mr. Barden was trying to remember where he had put the key of the liqueur-stand. The maid brought information that Mr.

Dunstan had called, and wished to see Mr. Barden for two minutes. A hospitable invitation was sent out, but the visitor preferred not to come beyond the hall. From the dining-room Mrs. Barden listened tremulously to a quick, alert duel in conversation.

"I don't stand on ceremony," snapped the caller. "My sister has been telling me about this snail business. It appears you lost your temper, made a sudden dash at her."

"It's a lie!"

"You're making it worse," declared the caller heatedly. "My sister and I, you must understand, are not in the habit of putting up with any nonsense. As a matter of fact, this is much more serious than you appear to imagine. She is as nearly as possible engaged to some one she met at a restaurant in St. Martin's Lane, and he's got eugenic ideas; and if she's crippled for life, why, it simply means that I shall have to go on keeping her for——"

"Now look here," said Mr. Barden persuasively, "I've no desire to know anything about your troubles and worries; what they are, they are, and you must put up with them. Go out of my house!"

"When I'm ready," said Dunstan, with obstinacy.

Whereupon Mr. Barden took him firmly by the shoulder. The two struggled to the front gate, where a policeman happened to be waiting in the hope of offering a few cordial words to Mrs. Barden's maid. The constable turned his bull's-eye on the scene, and, noting that Mr. Barden was getting the better of the fight, said no word until Mr. Dunstan, flung out on the asphalted pavement, ordered him to take the other in charge. The policeman

asked each for his name and address, and, this furnished, made an exchange, and, in handing over the documents, said it was a case for a summons, if anything. The constable, five minutes later, was in a position to offer a toast to Mr. Barden. "Here's to your very good health, sir, and the same to your good lady, if she will kindly allow me to say so."

"I shan't sleep a wink," declared Mrs. Barden.

"Worse things might have happened," remarked the policeman. "Mark my words, it'll soon blow over."

News of the wrestling match went up and down Begonia Road early the following morning, and Mr. Barden, leaving for the City, was regarded from the shelter of venetian blinds with an interest equal to that shown concerning Miss Dunstan's brother when he, later, took his departure for Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was considered a matter of genuine regret that neither party bore signs of grievous injury, but close observers declared the two looked ashamed of themselves. Begonia Road said the incident was one calculated to let the neighbourhood down in a most terrible fashion; one might really almost as well be living in Holloway. Two ladies discussed the advisability of seeing the new vicar about it.

Mrs. Barden ordered the maid to call next door with a polite message of inquiry, and the answer was that Miss Dunstan had enjoyed a night of moderate rest, and returned thanks for kind inquiries. Following this, Mrs. Barden, appalled as though about to take a considerable journey, left No. 21 and paid a formal visit to No. 22. Miss Dunstan herself opened the door, and the card-case had to be put away, and friendly conversation took place. Miss Dunstan said it was a pity menfolk lost

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their heads whenever an excuse offered itself; admitted that the bruise sustained through want of stability on the part of a wheelbarrow called upon to perform an unexpected duty, was already nearly well. She attributed this to the circumstances that a strict form of diet kept her in a good healthy condition. Mrs. Barden had heard of vegetarianism, but was not acquainted with the details. She came from the visit well supplied with literature on the subject, and exhilarated by the knowledge that she had met a difficult crisis with amiability.

Meanwhile the forces of the district were at work. The new vicar, made acquainted with the news, consulted his wife on the subject—he often spoke of her in public as his right hand and his never-failing adviser—and she counselled him to leave the Bardens and the Dunstans to settle the matter among themselves. He went at once to his study, and wrote to Mr. Barden, requesting him to call at the Mission House that evening, 7.30 precisely, to discuss a topic of “enormous import, not only to you, but to the community at large.” Mr. Barden, returning home, after an occupied day in Moorgate Street, and well pleased at his wife’s action, assumed that the invitation contained something in the nature of a compliment; guessed that he would be expected to move, or to second, a vote of thanks. The vicar, alone in a sparsely furnished room, received Mr. Barden defensively; ordered him to sit down on a packing-case.

“I am given to understand,” said the vicar heavily, “that you took a share, no longer ago than yesterday evening, in a scene of some violence.”

“Rather a good scrap while it lasted,” admitted Mr. Barden.

"I regret I was not present."

"If it happens again, vicar, you shall have a card."

"Had I been present, I should have flung myself between the two, and commanded you both to put an end to an incident unworthy of yourselves, and disgraceful—yes, disgraceful to the neighbourhood in which you live."

"Perhaps," said the other with spirit, "you will be good enough to explain what all this has got to do with you?"

"Mr. Barden," remarked the vicar, "you don't recognise the force of character and the alertness of action which are my distinguishing characteristics. The village in Wiltshire of which I had charge until my removal here, a few months ago, was, if I may say so, a model village."

"How do you account for that?"

"I will tell you. I will tell you frankly. It was due to the fact that I watched and controlled the interests and the very actions of each one of my parishioners."

"You try that game on up here in London," threatened Mr. Barden warmly, "and by Jove, we'll teach you a lesson you won't easily forget."

So many events of a larger importance have happened since that you may have forgotten the newspaper discussion that took place at about this time, entitled "Why our Churches are Empty." Mr. Barden sent in a forcible contribution to the debate, and the vicar replied. The vicar, on the persuasion of his Bishop, agreed, later, to go back to Wiltshire; but the model village, at the prospect, organised a riot, and neighbouring villages joined in. For mishandling the situation when troops were brought

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from Salisbury, General Widdecombe was put upon half-pay.

Begonia Road, N.W., watching events, and not altogether displeased to find itself a small but important cog in the machinery, felt disinclined to let the matter rest with the departure of the vicar for a living near Birmingham. One of the two ladies who had first moved in the affair of the wrestling match induced a brother-in-law, about to leave the country for New Zealand, to write a strongly worded letter to the member for the constituency, calling his attention to the inhuman treatment to which the late vicar had been subjected by his superiors, and demanding that the member should put a question in the House without a moment's delay. "If you omit to do this," said the writer, "it is probable you will be taught a lesson when the next General Election comes round." The communication reached the member at a time when he had been informed by the Prime Minister that, whilst his services to the government of the day were recognised, it was impossible to hold out any hope that he would be appointed to the Under Secretaryship that had recently become vacant.

"As a matter of fact, my dear chap," added the Prime Minister frankly, "you wouldn't be at all the ideal man for the job."

"May I ask why?"

"Certainly you may ask why," said the Prime Minister, "but no power on earth can make me answer. I'm far too old a bird to give reasons. Have a cigarette?"

The letter from the intending emigrant was handed to the member as he stamped his way out. He perused it, went instantly to the writing-room, and dashed off an

impetuous reply. The last act of the voyager to New Zealand was to send the letter to the office of a morning journal, where the sub-editor would have destroyed it only that he thought of an alliterative heading, "Amazing Missive of a Member." In the evening papers short leaders were based upon the subject. Was a parliamentary representative, asked the short leaders, entitled to address one of his constituents in terms of this violent nature? Was courtesy in political affairs to be reckoned a thing of the past? Did a brusqueness of manner and a deplorable want of the ordinary considerations of good breeding justify one in representing a London borough, and how much longer were the people of a free country going to put up with such treatment? Even the newspapers on the member's own side of thought suggested that the amenities of political life should be respected. "No doubt the communication was penned in a hasty moment, and the writer will be the first, we are sure, to offer the *amende honorable*."

Instead, the writer took up a high position. Disregarding the small point at issue, he announced that for some time past he had suspected the Government was playing fast and loose with the true interests of the country. He proposed to put the matter to a supreme test. Changing sides, he was returned by his constituency—thanks, partly, to his presence of mind in issuing a portrait of himself taken some fifteen years before—with a majority that ran into four figures. The Government, alarmed by this, asked, in the course of a debate, for a vote of confidence, and failed to obtain it. The General Election that followed cost in all well over a million pounds.

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"Hullo!" said Barden to his neighbour in Begonia Road one evening. "How's the garden getting on, laddie?"

"First-class, Bardie," replied Dunstan. "A few snails about, but nothing else to complain of."

"Doesn't do," agreed Barden, "to make a fuss over trifles!"

THE DEFEAT OF LADY GRANTHAM

By E. F. BENSON

SIR ROBERT GRANTHAM'S house in London has a garden attached to it of sufficient size to enable Lady Grantham to give garden parties. Her duties as a hostess on these occasions are limited to sitting under the charming cedar tree which stands just behind the house, and making scornful remarks to her guests. However, the affability of Sir Robert is universally acknowledged to be enough for two. Lady Grantham is Spanish by birth and dislikes English people. I got there rather late, and the guests were beginning to go. The remainder were grouped together round Sir Robert, who was pointing out to them the superiority of his garden to all others in London, not by praising his own, but by depreciating the rest.

"I don't know what I should do without a bit of garden where I can sit and smoke a cigar of an evening," he was saying. "I often wonder why any one ever comes up to London, if they have to live in a stuffy house like a barrack, with no garden attached, or a garden like Lord Orme's. I often say to him, 'Now my dear fellow, why on earth don't you buy up those two houses next you, and run a wall along from the corner? You'd get quite

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a decent little garden if you did that, whereas now you have scarcely got room to smoke a cigarette.' ”

Lady Grantham was sitting as usual under her cedar tree reading her French novel, and Miss Grantham, who had found it impossible to talk to people any longer, apart from the fact that her father was addressing every one who remained collectively, was sitting by her, and eating strawberries with an absent air. Lady Grantham looked up vindictively as I approached. “You are very late,” she said, “it is such wretched manners to come just as every one is just going away, and your hostess wants to go too. It is far better not to come at all, unless you can manage to come in decent time.”

The only sensible way of treating Lady Grantham is to take your cue from her. If she is not rude, there is no reason why you should be, if she is, there is no reason why you should not. Besides we are old friends.

“I didn't come to talk to you,” I said. “Please go away if you want. Or go on with your book if you like. You must have read a good deal this afternoon; you always read at your own parties, I believe.”

Lady Grantham smiled.

“Nora will talk to you, if you want to talk,” she said. “Talk, Nora.”

“What shall we talk about?” said Miss Grantham. “Have some strawberries. Oh, by the way, do you remember Miss Huntingford last year at the Nasebys'?”

“Yes, I remember. She's married.”

“That was what I was just going to tell you. How did you know?”

“It's no secret, I imagine, I saw her the other day.”

"She married the eldest Naseby. Her dear mother-in-law is furious."

Lady Grantham looked up. "Do you mean the governess, Nora?"

"Yes."

"It serves that woman right. I told her so this afternoon."

"I have no doubt you did," I gave myself the satisfaction of saying.

"She used to have her down in the drawing-room to play after dinner," continued Lady Grantham. "Now I always keep my governess in her proper place."

"You treat her like an under housemaid, as far as I remember," I said.

"You'd better not say much more, mother," said Miss Grantham. "He's got a passion for governesses."

"That's not quite true," said I, "only I don't see why they should be treated like servants."

Lady Grantham yawned. "Why should we talk about governesses?" she said.

"Well, you will have to talk *to* a governess soon, I expect," remarked Miss Grantham.

"Why?"

"Well, to an ex-governess; Mrs. Naseby told me she was coming when I saw her this morning."

"Why did you ask her?"

"You told me to; you went down to Ascot on Harry Naseby's coach last week you know."

"I shall send for Miss Toots to talk to her," said Lady Grantham. "Those people are much happier with their own class. They can talk about French exercises."

"I met Mrs. Henry Naseby the other day," I said,

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"she is very charming, and she has caught the trick of the world. I advise you to take care."

Sir Robert's party had begun to drift back toward the cedar, which, as he was careful to point out to them, was quite the finest tree of its sort in London, and had been planted by the first Lord Sandown, who, as all the world knew, and if they didn't he told them, was the founder of the family, and had been ennobled in the reign of Charles I. By degrees the remainder of the guests began to move, and there were only three beside myself left on the lawn, when a footman came out followed by a woman whom I scarcely recognised.

Mrs. Naseby was perhaps even more perfectly dressed than Lady Grantham herself, and that is saying a great deal. She walked as if she had been stared at all her life, and rather enjoyed it. I had only met her once since her marriage, and that several months ago, and though it was clear that she was learning the trick pretty quickly, I was not prepared for this transformation.

She lounged up to the cedar where we were sitting, bowed to me as if she ought to remember me but just did not, with that sublime self-possession which I had always imagined a thing which some were born with, but to be as unattainable as the line of aristocratic ancestors with which it is usually coupled. Then apparently for the first time she caught sight of Lady Grantham, who did not offer to rise.

"Ah, dear Lady Grantham," she said, "I really did not see you before. You are so right to keep quiet, and not stand about in the way most of us think it necessary to do when we receive our friends. I know how trying a hostess' duties are. And how do you do, Sir Robert? What

a charming garden you have! I always tell everybody it is the best in London, and they always tell me they knew that already."

Mrs. Naseby drew off a long glove meditatively.

"I remember so well meeting you at my mother-in-law's," she continued, turning to Lady Grantham again, "but of course you would not remember me."

"No, one necessarily sees very little of the governess," remarked Lady Grantham.

It was quite clear that Mrs. Naseby remembered Lady Grantham, and I waited for more.

"So dreadfully close, is it not, this afternoon," she went on; "I was really afraid that I should not get here at all, but your beautiful garden is the only cool place I have been in for days. You are not thinking of selling it, I suppose, Sir Robert? I should simply make Harry buy it if you were. How I shall survive to-night I really do not know. Prince Waldenech is dining with us, and we've got a party afterwards. So sorry I couldn't include you at dinner, Lady Grantham, but you know what a poky little dining-room we have."

Henry Naseby had one of the largest houses in London, and a new and magnificent dining-room, which would hold eighty people comfortably, and Lady Grantham knew it, and Mrs. Naseby knew she knew it, and everybody else knew they knew it.

Mrs. Naseby waited for a moment with true artistic instinct and then continued.

"But I hope you can manage to look in on us afterwards. Do you know the Prince? Of course he is quite an old friend of ours."

Lady Grantham shut her book and cleared for action.

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"Is he really? I should not have thought you would have known him long."

Mrs. Naseby laughed.

"Of course I cannot say that I am an old friend of his judging simply by the number of years I have known him. He is a compatriot of yours, is he not, Lady Grantham? You have known him twenty or thirty years? More than that I daresay. How I envy you! Such a charming man!"

Lady Grantham had to explain herself. She did so with a direct lucidity which is all her own.

"Your paths in life have not always been on the same level," she said. "That was all I meant. But perhaps he came up to the nursery when your husband was still small enough to be in your charge and used to pat him on the head. Was he a troublesome little boy? I suppose he must have been. All little boys are troublesome it seems to me. I think we owe so much to our governesses who kindly take charge of them for us till they are old enough to go to school."

Mrs. Naseby received the thrust with perfect composure.

"Yes, I think governesses are owed a great deal. You, dear Lady Grantham, can form no conception how odious small children, even the most delightful of their kind, can be. It's true that Harry is in my charge now—I feel the responsibility very much. But as a matter of fact he takes care of me. It is so delightful to have a husband whose longer experience of the world saves one from all snares and pitfalls. It makes me feel quite a little girl again."

Lady Grantham knew perfectly well that Mrs. Naseby

was her husband's senior, and she was not the woman to scruple to say so.

"Yes, of course he has been in the world—his world, my world, longer than you. You would not have come out, would you, until you married? I quite envy you the freshness of your impressions; it must be so interesting to know that other side of life. I always make my maid gossip to me in the evening when she is doing my hair. But how very stupid, if you will excuse my saying so, of your mother-in-law. She assured me that you were older than he. No doubt she exaggerated, for she was speaking with some bitterness."

Mrs. Naseby laughed charmingly.

"Really, Sir Robert, I am quite sorry for you. What an inquisition to have in the house! We are all so dreadfully afraid of Lady Grantham, you know. I shall have to warn the Prince against her. She will be saying all sorts of awful things to him, asking him his age and the Princess' age, and he will scold me dreadfully for having asked her at all. You will come, won't you, Lady Grantham? But wasn't it rude of her? Really I quite long to be a governess again, in order to make you stand in the corner for being rude."

Lady Grantham very seldom laughed, and laughter alone could have saved her. There are certain remarks which to ignore is to acknowledge.

She sat quite still for a moment, and an angry flush rose to her face. Sir Robert, who was always getting the worst of it with his wife, entirely declined to come to her assistance. She turned to Norah.

"Send for Miss Toots," she said.

Then to Mrs. Naseby—

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"I am sure you would like to see my governess. You can compare experiences. She is an excellent woman, and you probably have much more in common with her than you have with me."

"That is very likely," said Mrs. Naseby. "I always tell every one how kind you are, Lady Grantham, and how thoughtful for your guests; but, as you say, two Englishwomen must have much more to say to each other, than an Englishwoman and a foreigner. Do let Miss Toots come to us to-night. She is very pretty, I hear, and the dear Prince is a great admirer of English beauty."

Lady Grantham retreated in good order, but she distinctly retreated. I was delighted, and had a pitched battle with her on the next occasion that we met, and on parting wondered whether Mrs. Naseby would, for a consideration, give lessons in the noble art of self-defence.

THE CYPRESS CAT

By GRACE RHYS

IT was Penelope who, with a pair of scissors, cut a zigzag pattern in Polyphemus's tail. If you could see Polyphemus's tail you would know what this disaster meant. Polyphemus's tail was, after Mike's hair, the pride of the family. Then Polyphemus is otherwise and altogether so beautiful. His eyes (for he has both, notwithstanding his name) are large and green and pensive, and his disposition is aristocratic and urbane. He continually forgets he is a tom—a Persian tom of unusual size—and still goes sprawling, four legs together, after butterflies and beetles. What Eva declares to be his most darling propensity is to hug his hind legs and his nose all up together when he sleeps. He adores Penelope, although her way of lugging him about, without the slightest sense of his anatomy, ought to have estranged his affections long ago. The pair in this equation recall the fable of the unfortunate boy who began by carrying a calf, and went on carrying it till it grew into a bull; for Polyphemus, if you included his fur (which was a kind of glorified tabby with sunset effects), was not much inferior in bulk to Penelope, and some part of him always overflowed from her embrace and hung down most uncomfortably. Yet if you looked into his face, his expression was still seraphic, with that look of blinking

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beatitude which is only to be seen in cats or the angels of Perugini.

There was one very close bond between Penelope and Polyphemus. They both preferred the same doll. When Polyphemus could not come by the lap of Penelope, he found consolation in Agnes. Agnes was large, fair-haired, and stiff-jointed, with an idiotic smile. She was forever being discovered seated in different places all over the house, with some part of Polyphemus occupying the horizontal districts of her person.

Mike had discovered in a tattered book with a green-and-gold binding that cats could only grow attached to places, and not to people; and we were half-afraid that on the first slight or fit of indigestion, he would break for home. But whether it was that Penelope so weightily plied him with bread and milk, or (as we believe) he loved us, and not our domicile, he showed himself from the first contented with The Leys, its garden and preserves, so well stocked with game in the way of beetles and butterflies.

But in this paradise a snake was soon to reveal itself. The walls of the cottage were in places overgrown with ivy; in this a pair of thrushes had built a nest, taking leave in the long-untenanted state of the house. Polyphemus was delighted when he made out their establishment. The day after his arrival he was to be seen craning out of every window in turn, looking for a good view. The next day Penelope deposed to having seen him hanging from the gutter by two hind legs. The following night the house was awakened from its second sleep by a hideous fracas. The dawn was already abroad, a blackish grey. Polyphemus was scrambling about in the

ivy, crying at the top of his voice. Two infuriated thrushes were flying round the house, screaming and dabbing at Polyphemus every time they passed him. The pigeons were bursting out of the dovecot, and the sparrows were chattering on the roof. Polyphemus's shrieks grew more agonizing as the cock thrush dived at him. Overcome with terror, he missed his hold in the uncertain ivy, and suddenly fell smash on to the gravel below. Looking up to heaven and its fading stars in amaze that such a cruel fate should have overtaken him, he was gratified to see that every window of the upper story was garnished with a ruffled and staring head. Beholding such a prospect of sympathy, Polyphemus redoubled his cries and lay sprawling. In an instant the least honourable among the heads vanished, and there was a stampede for the front door. There is no doubt that Polyphemus carried off comfortable quarters for the remainder of the night. But, on the other hand, he had made himself a deadly enemy.

Next day on the lawn we witnessed a single combat. It was David and Goliath over again. Polyphemus came walking delicately like Agag out of the front door for his morning stroll. Instantly a cock sparrow doing outpost duty on the roof uttered a shrill note. The cock thrush flew on to a spring bush hard by, chattering loudly, while the hen thrush set up a scolding from the ivy.

Polyphemus sat down on the lawn to think. The thrush flew on to the grass in front of him and puffed himself out. Polyphemus chattered at him with that feline chatter of rage that tigers do to such perfection. The thrush ducked and hopped nearer. His voice was as loud as a penny whistle. Every separate feather was

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boiling with indignation. John Kemble, the actor, though a little man, was able, they say, when he played the part of a king in a rage, to wax greater and greater till he filled the stage. So did this atom of a thrush appear in his passion to expand and grow till he filled the whole lawn.

Polyphemus was greatly upset. It contradicted all his notions of bird-behaviour. He looked sideways. He wriggled. He backed. At last, after a vain effort to save his self-respect, he turned, dropped his tail, and with the meanest reduction of his bulk to half its natural size, fled into the house. Then the cock thrush and the cock sparrow and the hen thrush and the hen sparrow joined in a nervous bird-laughter of jubilation at his defeat.

After this, did Polyphemus show his nose at the hall door, or merely look out of the window, the whole confederacy was about his ears in a minute with such a hurricane of beak and claw that he went in fear of his life. There was nothing for it but to sulk on the morning-room sofa and study revenge.

One particular morning poor Polyphemus had appeared with a grievance. From an early hour he had been scratching at doors, trying to get into people's beds, sit on their laps and get under their chairs. He always had a newspaper to sit on at meals; and now, though it was only half through our sunny *al fresco* breakfast, he was spread out upon it, as close up to the side of Eve's chair as he could get, in a state of inflated and excessive bliss. His superficies looked enormous.

"Polyphemus is much better for the change of air," said Penelope.

"He's lookin' rippin'," said Mike.

The conversation was broken by the sudden irruption of our friend the cock thrush, who, followed by his mate, flew chattering loudly into our tree. In passing, he had almost threatened to alight on Polyphemus's head, so that all exclaimed; and I could not help ejaculating, "What a passion the little beggar is in this morning!"

At the first onslaught Polyphemus crept trembling under Eve's chair; the cock thrush, apparently quite indifferent to our presence, flew on to the nearest branch of maple; then, perched quite near us, he and his mate began a perfectly deafening shriek and chatter, scolding us as if their hearts would burst.

"Really," cried Eve, "what can be the matter?—they seem to be in a frenzy. I shall have to go indoors. I cannot bear such a noise," and she rose from her seat.

Hardly had she taken two steps when she exclaimed, "Oh, dear me! Whatever is that in the grass over there?" and turned hastily in the direction she had pointed.

We all followed. Polyphemus fled, an image of guilty terror, at a cringing gallop into the house; the thrushes pursued him all the way, yelling like twin furies and swooping at him right up to the very doorstep.

When we stood by Eve, the poor birds' passion was explained. On the lawn, scattered in the grass at her feet, were some small spotted feathers and a pitiful little bird's wing—all that was left to tell of Polyphemus's revenge. He had breakfasted on the first of the fledglings who had tried the outer world. For two days Polyphemus was without a friend in the world except Penelope, who took him for serious exercise in the paddock; the rest of the time he was shut up in the back kitchen.

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For two days three monstrously fat baby-thrushes hopped and ran about the flower-beds, guarded by their heroic parents, who, I am sure, had got no sleep for a fortnight. On the third morning they were gone clean away, and we never saw them again. But for days afterwards Polyphemus went in fear of his life, and suffered as much nervous torment as any Tsar of the Russias.

The gardener was delighted.

"That 'ere cypress cat o' yourn," he remarked, chuckling, "for all he be so wonderful big, he have no heart at all. He be no match for a little bit o' a Leysham thrush!"

NAT VINCENT—SMUGGLER

By ATHOL FORBES

“**T**HERE ain’t so much smugglin’ now in Gorleston as there used to be,” said the storekeeper, knocking out his pipe against the palm of his hand, preparatory to charging it again, and addressing his friend the policeman.

“And there are many reasons for it, mostly good ones. Sailor men knows where to get their baccy without payin’ the King’s Customs, but there’s not the demand now for pure tobacco or pure anythink. In my young days gold red Cavendish and pure sun-dried Virginian, old bonded, was the fashion. Now men don’t want to smoke no tobacco and they don’t know the taste of it. They want mixtures.”

“So mixtures has killed smugglin’, Fatty, have they?”

“Not altogether. Nat Vincent, there, on the brig, he done rather a clever thing right under the very nose of the customs officers. We got a new tide surveyor down here some years ago called Hodson, a rare clever chap in his own estimation. It was said he could scent contraband a mile off. He was no ’arf a bad chap apart from his dooty. He would come into the ‘Anchor’ an’ have a glass with the rest of us. Naturally, the conversation would turn on smuggling. Hodson was mad at makin’ no seizures, and that there Nat Vincent would come in

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and tell about 'arf hundredweights o' stuff gettin' through. Then 'e would put 'im on false scents. Of course Hodson swore that there was nothink to catch. Nat Vincent swore that there was heaps of stuff, only Hodson was new to the work, that's wot he made out."

"That's not the way to get on with officers," was the comment. "And it never pays; being in the force, I can speak o' that."

"No: but then you know Nat. He can no more keep out o' mischief than can old Satan 'imself. He lives for it, and loves settin' people by the ears."

"It's a nasty disposition."

"It is. Many a time I 'ave told 'im the same thing. Well, one night in the 'Anchor' he makes the revenue officer beside hisself with rage and mortification. In fact I never seed a man more mortificated than Hodson. Nat 'e say to him, 'I tell you it's your own fault. You are not clever enough to catch 'em smugglin'."

"'Prove it,' shouts the officer. 'I don't believe an ounce of contraband has got into this port since I came.'

"'I will prove it,' shouts Nat. 'Why, I'll bring in a gallon o' brandy without payin' dooty next voyage, just to give you a chance, Mr. Officer. If you can't catch me then, when you know the man and the ship and the stuff and the time of its arrival, then I say you are a duffer.'

"'And I'll say the same,' cried the officer, 'but of course you don't mean it.'

"'I do,' says Nat, 'and I bet you a quid I bring it off.'

"'Done,' shouts the officer, excited like, pulling out his purse.

"Nat, not to be outdone, plants down his sovereign,

and the landlord agrees to act as stake-holder. The brig then was trading to Boulogne, where brandy can be had cheap. The officer gives his word that no proceedings shall be taken against Vincent whether caught or not, and the company present was to 'ave the brandy to drink, all in the way of sport.

"The conditions was that Nat̄ was to bring the brandy into the 'Anchor' within four hours of the ship's arrival without bein' detected in contraband. This was all written down. Proof French brandy it had to be, with the receipt from the shop where it was bought in Boulogne."

"I understand," smiled the constable, "and I see how 'e done it."

"Do you?" inquired the astonished storekeeper.

"Yes: Nat 'ad it sent by post."

"You are a genius, Bobby, you are indeed; but Nat did not think o' doin' it that way."

"Then I don't see 'ow he done it."

"I never said 'e had done it yet, and he couldn't 'ave done it your way. The post office don't undertake jobs o' that kind without gettin' paid for their trouble and all the taxes besides. Well, about three weeks arter this the brig is due in again.

"A fairish number of people 'ad got wind of it, and by the time the *Rising Sun* was alongside the Gorleston Quay there was a crowd. A cheer went up when we saw old Nat. He shook his head rather sorrowfully. 'Lumbago,' he groaned, 'awful bad.'

"He 'ad a lot o' luggage baskets and bags. 'Now which will you examine among that job lot?' he arks Hodson, the tide surveyor. 'I wants to get ashore.'

"'We'll examine you first,' Hodson says. 'Here,

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searchers,' and two gentlemen in uniform fell upon poor old Nat like terriers on one rat. 'Don't let 'im out of your sight,' commands their superior officer.

" 'That's not fair,' says Nat. 'You are bein' too strict with me. I says you are not sharp enough and now I gets the benefit of it. This lumbago makes things worse for me.' Nat sits down patient like on one of his packages and groans while they examines his luggage. In one crate there was a lot of medicine bottles. 'Ha! ha!' says one o' the customs.

" 'I ain't got no carrots for you this time, Neddy, so don't make them noises,' says Nat. That young officer got quite mad, and he was madder when he found there was nothink in the bottles, and nothink on him. They kept arrangin' and re-arrangin' the bottles on the deck.

" 'Bring my foot-warmer,' shouts Nat to the cookie. 'I'm goin' to stay 'ere all night it seems,' and 'e shivers. Presently Charlie appears with an old railway foot-warmer, same as you see in the Great Eastern carriages. 'Now bring me a rug,' he cries. All the people on the quay was larfin' at his antics.

" 'Give me the key of your locker,' says one of the customs, and Nat 'ands it over. 'This ain't improvin' my lumbago,' he says, 'keepin' me shivering.'

" 'No, but it's winnin' my bet,' says Hodson.

" 'You 'ave no right to put on extra men,' snarled Nat. 'It don't give no chance to me.'

" 'I have to take all precautions in the execution of my dooty.'

" 'Well, if my losin' a quid makes you a good officer, sharp, and worth your money to your country, it's cheap

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at the price. I don't begrudge it. Shall I leave you the key of the keel before I go home?"

" 'You get ashore,' says the officer, sharply.

" 'I'm stiff with cold,' answers he, with a groan.

" 'Come on then, I'll 'elp you,' and Hodson pulls 'im to his feet, and assists him over the bulwark. 'Have your warmin'-pan and rug,' he says, chuckin' them on the quay. 'We'll send on the other things afterwards.'

" 'I think I'll sit down in the "Anchor" until I know 'ow the wager 'as gone, and whether you 'ave found the brandy.'

" 'Yes: you'll be comfortable there. Just keep yourself warm until I call for your sovereign and my own.'

"Nat Vincent nodded his 'ead, and we all felt sorry for the old man. Hodson 'ad turned out a scorcher an' no mistake. There was no flies on 'im.

" 'I won't want my 'ot water bottle.'

" 'Better take it,' says the officer. 'Here, Richardson,' he calls to one of his colleagues, 'take this acrost to the "Anchor" for Vincent.'

" 'Thank you kindly, but don't trouble.'

" 'No trouble at all,' says Hodson. No more it weren't to 'im. So Nat goes acrost to the 'Anchor,' the officer carrying his rug and the old foot-warmer. We follows. As soon as he got inside the snug o' the 'Anchor,' he says to the customs chap: 'Take my dootiful compliments to the tide surveyor and tell 'im the brandy is 'ere hot, and ready for drinkin'.'

"Next moment, hotter than any brandy, Hodson rushes in. 'You 'aven't got it ashore?'

" 'Sit down, Mr. Tide-surveyor,' says Nat. 'We've got it ashore all hot in this old foot-warmer. There's

NAT VINCENT—SMUGGLER

a little over a gallon, but we won't claim nothink extra for that, and the brandy is the best Boulogne could supply.'

"And so it was. I can testify to that," added Fatty, and he passed his tongue over his lips as he recalled it.

THE FABLE OF THE SPOT-LIGHTERS AND THE SPOTTER

By G. ADE

ONCE a Traveller arrived at a Cure where the Water of the Healing Springs smelled so awful that the Management felt justified in asking \$10 a Day.

This Traveller was a City Yap, which is worse than being a Begosher, because the R.F.D. Boob usually knows that he is below Par.

The City Yap is a Vertebrate with Shiny Hair, living under the dominion of the Traffic Cops.

He will stand in front of a Window, with others of his Kind, for an Hour at a time, watching a powerful Blonde demonstrate a Fireless Cooker.

When \$100,000,000 gets married to a Title, it is the City Yap who has to be clubbed back by the Police so that the Bride can get her Purchase into the Sanctuary.

When Jack Dempsey or Prince Blozotski arrives by Special Train, the City Yap is the poor Google-Eye that you see standing in the Rain.

He believes that Greatness means having one's Name on the Front Page; consequently it is better to jump off

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THE SPOTLIGHTERS AND THE SPOTTER

the Williamsburg Bridge than to be an Emeritus Professor at Johns Hopkins.

Perhaps the Reader will ask: "Could a City Yap afford to put up at one of these Ten-a-Day Resorts?"

Listen!

Some of the City Yaps have been to Harvard. They have tailor-made Underwear, Gold Service for Company, De Luxe Editions, Divorce Papers—Everything.

This particular Species of Metropolitan Mokus used to Boast that he could walk into any Hotel and the Clerks would hoist the Flag.

Such a Claim might not seem Portentous to one residing in Grand Island or Waupaca, but there are Favoured Spots within the Republic at which being known by the Boys behind the Desk is the very Essence of Fame.

Sure enough, the Lad who gives out the Keys recognized the Traveller and called him by Name and let on as though the Tavern had just opened and here was the first Customer.

After the newly arrived Delegate from the Asphalt Jungles had read a Telegram saying that Frazzingham Preferred had advanced from $\frac{3}{4}$ to $\frac{7}{8}$ on a Report that the King of Rumania had received a Letter from the King of Greece, he brushed up a little and then sauntered back to the Bureau of Information and asked the Room Clerk if any one was stopping in the House.

Of course he knew that some 500 Transients of fair Business Standing and the usual Family connections were scattered about the Premises.

When he said "Any One," he meant did they have any one who would get Attention from the Head Waiter Himself.

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A true Worshipper of the Exalted Few regards the common Run of Humanity as mere Whitebait. If you wish to hand him a Thrill, you must show him a Tarpon.

"We have so many Stars here that even the Manager is trembling," replied Cuthbert, the refined Room Clerk. "Do you see that Bunch out on the Piazza, taking the Sun? Leave me call them off to you. First, there is Jimmy Hooper, supposed to be the nerviest Plunger on the Exchange. He can lose or win a Million without disturbing the Ash on his Cigarette. He makes all the other High Rollers in the world look like Marble Players. He is King of the Gilt-Edge Gams."

"I have read all about him in the Papers," said the Roof-Garden Rufus.

"Then there is Mr. Hiram Cherrib, who has closed out all his big Interests and puts in his Time endowing Hospitals and slipping Coin to Presbyterian Colleges. He allows that he will shoot every Bean in the old Tin Box and die Poor if he can do good to those that he formerly Did so successfully."

"For years I have yearned to get a peek at Mr. Cherrib," said the Café Habitué.

"And lookie! There is Mrs. Beverly Margrave, often called the uncrowned Empress of the American Hotel Mond. You've heard of her!"

"HAVE I?" exclaimed the Bumpkin from the Boulevards.

His Nostrils were quivering.

"She was a Terwhilligus from Baltimore, you may recall. I know People who would give their Eye-Teeth just to have her Insult them. Then they could say they had Met her. Right next to her Nobs is the famous

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Preacher, Rev. Ormsby Toncell. They say he pulls down the biggest Salary and has the swellest lot of Box-Holders of any Parson in this whole Country. Even the English think he's English. He must be a talented Guy all right!"

"Hardly a week passes but I see an Interview with him," said the Subway Simp.

"As I live and breathe, she's out there, too," ejaculated the highly intelligent Room Clerk.

"Who?" asked the eager Cosmopolite.

"Lottie Limmert, the big Hit in that new Piece called 'Oh, Lizzie!' You remember—the Police made them change it. She had a Song Hit that caused a Strike in the Orchestra. Some of the Musicians said they had Families."

"I tried to buy Seats"—in a Choking Whisper—"but they were sold out Eight Weeks in advance, and the Speculators asked Ten for Two on the Aisle."

"She is Some Gal. It is reported that they are going to put up a Statue of her at Yale. The Female Party right near her is supposed to be the Richest Woman in the Western Hemisphere."

"You don't mean Jane Plummer, the Widow that gets a Full Page in the Sunday Issue every two or three weeks?" asked the City Chap, his Cup of Joy just about ready to slop over.

"None other. I remember reading how much her Income would weigh if she changed it into Nickels. By the way, there's another Big Gun out there. I didn't notice him at first. Probably you've read the Editorial Attacks on Steve Gurney, the Political Boss."

"You don't mean the head of the Venal State Machine, who sits in a Back Room and gives orders to the Legisla-

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ture and dictates Appointments and pulls all that Coarse Stuff, do you?"

"That's the Bird! I can see that you're well read. They've been trying for Years to get something on him and take his Measure, but he is still riding the Tractor."

"Me to put myself next," said Mr. H. Polloi. "I don't often get a Close-Up of these Immortals, and I'm sure going to Periscope."

So he edged out into the Sunlight and stalked his Prey.

There was one empty Chair right in the thick of the Who's Who, and he nailed it.

Oh, Joy! Oh, Bliss! And a couple of Raptures!

He found himself within smelling-distance of Lottie Limmet, the Forty-Second Street Parisienne.

There was no mistaking the much talked-of Cutie.

If Colours could be converted into Sounds her Costume would have been a Siren Whistle.

She had her Limbs crossed in such a way as to prove that she spared no Expense, but, nevertheless, her Knee-Caps were modestly concealed.

He knew it was She or Her because alongside of the Gay Creature and very Chummy was the famous Wall Street Blokie, Jimmy Hooper, dressed up like a Horse.

Yes, indeed! Shepherd's Plaid, Stripes on the Shirt, and a Bow Tie that looked like a Clot of Blood.

He had "Gambler" placarded all over him.

Our Hero knew that every Soubrette has a Gentleman Broker Friend who gives her Tips on the Market, so that oftentimes she will clean up as much as \$300,000 at a Crack and then send her Mother a Watch.

He knew, because that was part of the Paper he devoured.

THE SPOTLIGHTERS AND THE SPOTTER

It is easy to get acquainted with an Actress, so in a few minutes George W. Fresh was carrying on with the Footlight Favourite and exchanging Hot Ones with Jimmy the Sport.

Presently the one who had been identified as Steve Gurney, Malefactor and Enemy of the People, edged over with his Rocking Chair and joined in the gay chatter of the Bohemians.

After giving Steve the Up-and-Down, it was easy to believe all that had been printed about him in the Righteous Press.

He was undershot and had Fuzz on the Back of his Hands.

He looked like a Vessel Unloader who had put on a Mail Order Suit in order to attend a Clam Bake.

The sort of Person you wouldn't care to meet in a Lonesome Street on a Rainy Night.

While the Investigator was letting himself go, in the company of these Abandoned Characters, and wondering what the Boys at the Lunch Club would say when he pulled it on them, he sized the other Notables close at hand.

Mrs. Beverly Margrave was perceptibly annoyed by the immediate presence of the *Canaille*, meaning Ordinary Skates.

Her prim but high-priced Suit of Quaker Gray, the chiselled suggestion of Patrician Reserve on her cold features, the wince of Pain and the lifted Eyebrow when Steve Gurney guffawed loudly, and the fact that she was reading George Moore—all these Items meant much to the Observant Traveller.

Why deny Class Distinction when even a Stranger can single out a True Genevieve with Pink Coruscles?

Near the Queen of the Swagger Set, a pale Gentleman in somber Attire seemed quite lost in contemplation of the hazy Landscape.

He gave no heed to the gabby Groundlings only a few feet away.

He held daintily between the Forefinger and Thumb a White Rose with slender Stem.

At intervals he would lift the gorgeous Bloom to the Olfactory Orifice and inhale in a conservative manner, closing his Eyes and seeming to pass into a pleasant Trance.

It was a Cinch to place this Party as the Rev. Ormsby Toncell.

The absence of Jewellery, the Ascetic Pallor, the simple adoration of Purity's Emblem—all these bespoke a Nature more Spiritual than Broadway.

Out by the Veranda Rail, seemingly lost in Meditation as he propped his Chin with a Newspaper made into a Roll, sat Horace Cherrib, the foremost Benefactor of his Time.

The City Fellow knew him by his Side Whiskers.

In every Good Show, the Elderly Person with Money who is trying to save some one else from Ruin and bring Happiness to the Deserving carries quite a mess of Ivy in front of each Listener.

Even if there had been no Trade-Marks, it would have been a Pipe to make the eminent Philanthropist.

The Light of Goodness twinkled in his Baby Blue Eyes and a Smile of infinite Kindliness illumined his Handsome Diagram.

THE SPOTLIGHTERS AND THE SPOTTER

He seemed oblivious, detached, quite unaware that others were watching him.

He was planning, dreaming—what? Possibly new Hospitals for the Crippled Children, more Colleges for the Farm Hands.

It was worth a Day's Journey just to sit and look at the great Cherrib.

You may be sure that the Lynx also improved this Golden Opportunity to get a line on Jane Plummer, the good old Standby of the Sunday Editor.

He knew her by the Ear-Bobs, which were Pearls about the size of Ripe Olives.

He had put in a lot of time studying Price Tags and he judged the Pearls would fetch close to \$50,000 apiece, or \$100,000 for the Two.

But, of course, she could afford it, so it was none of his Business.

Mrs. Plummer, whose Vast Fortune if converted into \$1 Bills and placed End to End would reach from Boston to Omaha, was engaged in some sort of Fancy Work on a Tambourine Frame.

She chatted in a care-free way as her jewelled Fingers plied the busy Needle.

Her remarks were addressed to a timid little Woman in rusty Black, who seemed more or less Cowed, which proved that she must be the hired Companion.

The Boy from the City had learned by a careful course of Reading, while lying in Bed, that every Woman of tremendous Wealth is trailed by a Female Friday who is addressed by her last Name.

He tried to pick out a Label for this Worm and decided that it might be Wiggins or Tubbs.

While he was wallowing in blissful Juxtaposition to the Prominent, some one touched him on the Shoulder.

It was the Room Clerk.

"I am off Watch," said the Employee, "and will take you on for Nine Holes."

Excusing himself from the Musical Comedy Star and the bold Speculator and the unprincipled Corrupter, he started for the Locker Room with Cuthbert, who had put him next to the King Pins.

"You are unquestionably the Child of Fortune," said the Room Clerk. "I take it that Mixer is your Middle Name. You work fast."

"One is always safe in flagging a theatrical Fairy," was the modest Reply. "I had no hesitancy about busting in as soon as I heard my friend Jimmy Hooper kidding her along."

"Why, you poor Fish! You have been getting gay for a Half Hour with Mrs. Beverly Margrave, acknowledged Leader of the Young Married Set."

"You must be mistaken. Mrs. Margrave was dressed in Gray and reading one of them High-Brow Books, and she got peeved because we made so much Racket."

"The Lady in Gray who won't speak to any one is Lottie Limmel. She won't even sign Autograph Albums."

"Back up! Do you mean to tell me that Mrs. Beverly Margrave, who comes of the most Aristocratic Family in Maryland, would stand for all that Joshing from a Rounder like Hooper?"

"Are you talking about that Buddie with the Loud Checks and the Crimson Cravat?"

"Sure."

THE SPOTLIGHTERS AND THE SPOTTER

"That was the Rev. Ormsby Toncell, and, take it from me, he's a regular Human Being."

"I think you're Twisted."

"No chance. Room Clerks know everything."

"I'm almost positive that the Reverend Toncell sat over to my right. He was dressed something like an Undertaker and kept smelling a Rose."

"You just got them reversed, that's all. The one with the Rose was Jimmy Hooper. He's Nuts about Flowers and keeps a fresh Bouquet on his Desk all the time."

"Have you got the unblushing Face to tell me that the Jolly Party with the Make-Up was the exclusive Matron and that a celebrated Preacher wore any such Stripes on his Shirt?"

"That's what I'm trying to Convey."

"Well, I'll prove that you're off. Do you think Mrs. Beverly Margrave and the Rev. Ormsby Toncell would hobnob with Steve Gurney after what all the newspapers have printed about him?"

"They didn't hobnob with Steve. They couldn't. He never goes near a Silk Stocking unless he wants to use him, and then he sends for him."

"Didn't I see it with my own Eyes?"

"Oh, you mean the big, square-jawed Burly that never buttons his Vest! That was Horace Cherrib, whom I told you about—the one that's going to save the World by feeding it \$10 Bills."

"I don't think you took a good Look."

"Cert'nly I did. Steve wasn't near you Folks. He sat over there by himself and never chirped. 'Silent Steve,' his Friends call him."

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"I refuse to believe that a kind-faced and gentle Soul like that is really the Boss of a disreputable Machine."

"No other kind could be. He wins out by making Friends."

"Well, anyway, I made no miscue on the Rich Widow. I marked her by the Expensive Pearls."

"Where do you get that Noise? Her Bill for Jewellery last wear was 85 cents. She bought a jet Hat-Pin."

"Oh, come off! You don't mean to say——"

"Yes; the scared little Dame in the Black Gown, purchased direct from one of our largest Department Stores, has more Currency than you and I could shovel with two Shovels in two Weeks."

"How about the one with the enormous Pearls and the Seven Rings?"

"Oh, that's her French Maid—From Wisconsin."

Moral: The recognized Types never run true to Form during the Vacation Period.

THE OLD PAL

By J. STORER CLOUSTON

SIR WYVERNE WARRINGTON-BROWNE, baronet and enthusiastic dabbler in the sciences, having evidently read the fictitious narrative of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, decided to make the experiment of dissolution in actual real life; "taking, however" (to quote his own words), "the most minute precautions that it would be the *better* part of my nature that would appear in my guise and not the worse!"

The surprising results of this experiment will perhaps best carry conviction if they also are told in his own words:—"There was an evanescent but very extraordinary sensation, as of a bomb suddenly bursting within me, and the next moment who do you think sat in that room? As I am a living sinner, two men! Instead of rising into my higher self I had simply been divided into my lighter half and my solider half."

The literally exact nature of his remarkable narrative is further illustrated by his very precise description of these disjoined ingredients of his personality. "One of them" (he related) "was a charming youth, with fair, wavy hair and the most animated and agreeable face.

"The other was his exact opposite in every way,—a square-headed, heavily jawed man, considerably older,

with a very tightly compressed mouth, and the most austere eyes imaginable. So there I was!"

The story may now be continued precisely as he told it to his oldest friend.

I

"First," said the Baronet, "I may mention that I had taken one judicious precaution. Suspecting that my better self might not measure exactly the same round the waist as me, I providentially looked ahead. Otherwise there would have been two men with only one suit of clothes between them.

"As it happened, the square-headed party was left sitting in my own blue suit, I suppose because he was too solid to be shifted. It was a bit loose for him, but then he wasn't a fellow you'd expect to be well-dressed. But the gay youth might have been in the deuce of a hole. In fact, his first remark on coming into existence was——

"‘Talking of the weather, I'm going to get dressed. How about these?'

"Not knowing either the size or the taste of the angelic being I had hoped to create, I had invested in three lots of 'ready-for-service suitings and shirtings'—of different sizes and degrees of fascination, and so forth. The youth went straight as a bullet for a fairly lively shepherd's plaid, a pink shirt, and a pair of yellow boots. I hadn't really backed that lot for a place with the angel, but they were an easy winner with him.

"‘These seem the nearest things here to a bit of all right,' said he, hopping into the trousers, 'don't they, old cock?'

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"The grave man displayed no enthusiasm.

" 'I am neither old nor a cock,' he replied sternly, 'and I beg to inform you that if you continue to make inaccurate statements, our disjoint existence will become a very inharmonious affair.'

" 'If I confined myself to accurate statements about your appearance, old bird, my conversation would very soon get on your nerves,' said the youth, diving into the pink shirt. 'And talking of nerves, how do you think the public will stand this tie?'

" 'It was a yellow tie, whose chief merit was that it matched the boots. (I had ordered the things without seeing them, I may mention.)

" 'The grave party looked at him gloomily.

" 'You are going to be a very serious handicap,' said he.

" 'Cheer up!' cried the other gaily, as he buttoned his braces; 'I can assure you I don't propose to sit here and look at you one instant after I'm dressed and named. By the way, what's your name going to be?'

" 'I am named already,' said the grave man; 'I am Sir Wyverne Warrington-Browne—or at least by far the better part of him, as is proved by my remaining in his clothes.'

" 'The sediment generally stops in the jug,' replied the youth. 'Apropos of which, if you go about calling yourself Sir W. W.-B., you'll be still worse juggled in half an hour.'

" 'The justice of the latter part of this remark struck the grave man forcibly.

" 'I suppose we shall have to adopt some other designa-

tion,' he said reluctantly. 'What do you propose to call yourself?'

"'Archibald,' said the young man promptly. 'It's a name I've always admired, and I never met an Archie yet who wasn't a successful co-respondent. What are you going to be?'

"'I think,' replied the other with profound deliberation, 'that on the whole I incline to Samuel.'

"'Devilish suitable,' agreed Archibald; 'Samuels are generally prosperous and seldom found out. And now, what about surnames? Supposing one of us was Warrington and the other Browne? I'll be Warrington.'

"'You will be nothing of the kind,' said Samuel with considerable heat. 'As I represent Wyverne's virtues, I have first choice. You'll be Browne.'

"'It's the most unsuitable name for a sinner I've ever heard of!' cried Archibald. 'I'm no more Browne than I'm drunk!'

"'Remember it's Browne with an "e,"' said Samuel persuasively. 'Also I venture to prophesy that you *will* be drunk.'

"'Look here, old bird,' said Archibald, in a reasonable voice, 'it's never safe to count for certain on any man getting drunk except oneself, and I assure you I'll never be Browne while I'm sober. The obviously sporting thing is to start fair with fresh names. Then we won't have to share the credit with any one. I'll be Archibald Fitzwyverne. Its more or less correct, too.'

"'It's as vulgar as your tie,' said Samuel, 'but I suppose it's quite appropriate. I shall be plain Harris.'

"'You certainly can't be handsome Harris, old boy;

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and I must say Samuel Harris sums you up pretty accurately.'

"By this time he had finished lacing his boots, and he went and had a look at himself in the mirror over the mantelpiece, getting on a chair to view the boots.

"'One of the knuts,' he pronounced, 'and not the worst of them!'

"And then jumping off the chair he cried—'Well, Sambo, I'm off, good-bye!'

(Hardly necessary to say, Archibald headed for London, and there, after several adventures, he had the good fortune to secure an invitation to a dance.)

II

Musing happily on his exceptional luck, Archibald presently discovered himself still in the Green Park, shut off by the railings from the traffic and life of the street. There was not far to go before he came to another gate, but even this brief divorce from the enticing world beyond the bars struck him as an admirable instance of the melancholy way in which some fellows wasted their time. The habits of the late Sir Wyverne were a particularly sad example.

"To think of the fellow—practically *me*—mugging up scientific books and political pamphlets alone in his study!" he said to himself. "What a handicap Samuel was!"

Just before he arrived at the gate he perceived another sad instance—a man still on the right side of middle-age, who seemed to prefer sitting alone on a bench to strolling through the crowd. As Archibald's compassionate eye surveyed this figure, it noted, however, cer-

tain extenuating circumstances. The solitary's overcoat was sadly frayed at the cuff, one boot showed a loose flap where the upper ought to have joined the sole, his felt hat was of at least three shades of green; in short, he was not quite suitably dressed for a promenade in Piccadilly. Still, sitting alone in the Green Park required a lot of explanation.

And then suddenly the solitary's face seemed familiar.

"It's poor old Jack Swinby!"

To pass an old acquaintance simply never occurred to Archibald. He would have hailed him at once, only his two recent adventures made him cautious.

"Fellows' nerves don't seem as strong as they used to be," he reflected.

So he seated himself on the bench beside the shabby solitary and began in a breezy conversational way, calculated to calm the most sensitive nerves—

"Jolly day, isn't it? I say, don't you find it a bit quiet here? Some fellows like it, I suppose, but it always seems to me rather a pity to waste one's fragrance on the desert air, et cetera."

The solitary looked at him dully. He had pleasant blue eyes, a little bloodshot; his chin was covered with a stubble of fair bristles; his air was apathetic; when he spoke his voice was monotonous but unmistakably that of a gentleman.

"I don't know that I'd call myself very fragrant," he replied.

"That will come all right," said Archibald encouragingly. "Give yourself a chance—that's all that's wanted."

"A chance!" said the other, with a note in his voice which touched Archibald exceedingly.

THE OLD PAL

"You don't remember me, I suppose," said he. "But I know you quite well. You're Jack Swinby."

The solitary was roused this time. He sat up sharply, and there was suspicion in his eyes.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"A fellow you've often met—when you used to go to Warrington-Browne's rooms."

"That's an obvious lie," said Swinby bluntly. "It's twelve years at least since I last saw Warrington-Browne. You must have been an infant then."

"Oh, Lord!" said Archibald. "These complications are really the deuce! Well, anyhow, my name's Archie Fitzwyverne, and you're going to dine with me to-night, and that's the fact of the matter, old bird."

"To dine with you to-night!" repeated Swinby, with a laugh that was more melancholy than his apathy had been. "I don't know how you got hold of my name, but have you the least idea of my distinguished career?"

"Rather!" said Archie. "You were in the 35th Hussars, then you chucked the service and weren't very lucky, and so on and so forth, and now I suppose—not to beat about the bush—you've landed on your uppers, as many another good sportsman has done."

"Good sportsman!" repeated Swinby sardonically. "It was the blank army who chucked me, and the blank police have made my acquaintance since, and you'd better keep your invitations for people who can accept them."

He turned away as he spoke, and then turned back and threw another curious glance at Archibald.

"Who the devil are you?" he demanded.

"That's neither here nor there," said Archie, jumping

up. "You just wait here and I'll be back in half an hour."

"You'll probably still find me here if you call again at two in the morning," said Swinby, with his uncomfortable laugh.

"Good Lord! Haven't you any rooms, Jack?"

"Jack!" echoed Swinby, with a gust of laughter. "I have a room, Archie, my old pal, in a highly fashionable part of the town, but it has a landlord, and he has been making some uncivil inquiries about rent for the last month or two. My room isn't very healthy at present in consequence."

"Pay him a couple of quid on account," suggested Archibald, holding out his hand. "It's a loan, old bird; take 'em."

"A loan?" said Swinby, taking the sovereigns with a hasty movement that almost suggested he was afraid they would suddenly vanish. "And when do you expect me to pay you back, friend of my youth?"

"Oh, I never let people pay me back under a year—that's to say, a year per quid—two years in your case. It's the interest I think of. Well, I'll be back presently. Be good!"

The fashionable apparition sped up the path to the gate and vanished in the crowd of Piccadilly, leaving an extremely perplexed waif on the bench.

In about half an hour the brilliant youth returned, this time carrying a small suit-case.

"Excuse my taking a liberty, Jack," he said, "but the fact is, there's a fellow I'm going to introduce you to who's one of the best but a bit of a snob, and I thought I'd better fit you up first with a few et ceteras."

THE OLD PAL

As he spoke he opened his bag and took out of it a hat, an overcoat, and a pair of boots.

"I had to have a shot at the sizes," he explained, "but they'll probably see you through the next hour or so. Stick your old things into the bag."

Mr. Swinby stared at him hard.

"You don't look exactly like the Salvation Army type," he said, "but I'm damned if I can make out what you're driving at otherwise."

He began to take off his boots while Archibald lit a cigarette and seated himself beside him.

"What strikes me is," said he, "that people are extraordinarily easy surprised. For the last three days I've been noticing it. Of course I naturally want to produce a good impression; it costs no more—or at least only a fiver here and there, and it's deuced sound form of philanthropy I always think. At the same time, I really don't see any good and sufficient reason for the wild flutter that seems to agitate the spectators whenever I appear. If I wasn't of a hopeful disposition I'd begin to fear that good men were getting scarce."

Mr. Swinby's stare became more comprehending.

"Cracked!" he said to himself. "But it's not for me to complain."

In a new hat, overcoat, and pair of boots, and with a gleam of hope once more in his blue eyes, he looked a very different gentleman from the waif of ten minutes ago.

"Now," said Archibald, "come on. My car's waiting for us."

He led the way into Piccadilly, his old friend following with the gleam in his eye still brighter. When he found

himself in the green upholstered car and they started eastwards, there appeared on his face for the first time the dawn of a smile.

"If I might venture to make a suggestion," said he, "this person you are going to be so kind as to introduce me to——"

"My tailor!" confided Archibald.

He perceived that he had caused another flutter of surprise.

"Your tailor!" gasped Swinby.

"My dear old bird, absolutely the first thing you need is a suit of evening clothes! That goes without saying."

He was distressed to notice how lugubrious his old friend's face had suddenly become.

"Evening clothes!" said he, and made a melancholy attempt at a laugh. "I *had* been thinking of a bit of supper."

"Supper!" exclaimed Archibald. "My dear Jack, it isn't lunch-time yet."

"I was beginning with the last meal I didn't eat," explained Swinby.

Archibald looked thoughtful.

"This is a bit of a dilemma," said he. "Even if we get you measured at once, it's making Pond work pretty hard to have your evening clothes ready for a dance to-morrow night."

"A *dance*?" said Swinby, in a low, and it seemed awed voice.

"However," said Archie cheerily, "it's clearly a case where an extra fiver is well spent. We'll have a hasty snack at the Chic, and see what Pond will do if I tell him to name his own figure. Hi, Jehu! Back to the Chic!"

THE OLD PAL

The stout dark expert (who answered very amicably to "Jehu" for much the same consideration as inspired Pond & Co.) touched his peaked cap, and Mr. Swinby's face began to clear again. He only ventured one more word of protest.

"About to-morrow night," said he, "the fact is I've been out of the way of going to dances——"

"You'll get into your stride again in two minutes, old bird. Hullo, here we are. Hop out! By the way, fizz is still your drink, I suppose?"

Mr. Swinby hopped out and approached the revolving door of the Hotel Chic with the air of a somnambulist.

"Captain Swinby is going to have my other bedroom," Archibald announced at the office. "He's just back from the Antarctic, and so he's a bit short of luggage and so on, but one of the most distinguished."

"That makes it all right," he explained to his old friend. "Captains are always popular, and no one expects to see knuts landing from the Antarctic. Now for a few oysters and a bottle of fizz."

.

Archibald's gracious intention of picking up Mr. Muldevon and his daughters at their house had been communicated to them by telegram (Archibald believed in telegrams; they saved time, and time was money he said), and shortly after nine o'clock the Rolls-Royce arrived. Inside it were two such fashionable-looking gentlemen that the Miss Muldevons agreed at once that their father had selected their escort with admirable judgment. And at least one of the gentlemen was apparently equally satisfied.

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"Lucky as usual!" exclaimed Archibald enthusiastically.

"Who is?" enquired Miss Julia.

"Me," said Archibald, "and you can guess why if you like."

Mr. Muldevon changed the conversation at this point, rather tactlessly, Archibald thought. Still, he was sure he had made a good beginning.

As the gay party entered the ballroom, all on the best of terms already, Mr. Muldevon and his elder daughter fell a little behind the others and the jovial stockbroker's expression became for the moment a trifle less hilarious.

"Julia," he whispered, "I wish you would manage to find out something more about this young fellow, Fitzwyverne. Pump him a bit when you get the chance."

Julia, who was both a dutiful and a discreet daughter, nodded significantly.

Meanwhile fortune's favourite had already thrown his arm round the waist of Evangeline (a sophisticated debutante with a remarkable eye for what she termed toniness and knuttiness), and off they went to a rousing waltz.

The sensation they caused was exceedingly gratifying. The vanished Sir Wyverne's dancing days had fallen in a period of athletic waltzing, which was doubtless the reason why his lucky half whirled through the more sedately revolving crowd like a runaway gyroscope. With his coat-tails flying and his face radiant with joy, talking very loudly and cheerfully all the time, he spun round the room with prodigious velocity while above the strains of the band rose intermittently the sound of a crashing bump and a genial cry of—

"Sorry old bird! My fault!"

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Evangeline thought she had never had so exciting an experience before, but she afterwards confided to her most intimate friend that it was actually eclipsed by her subsequent experience in a very dark and remote sitting-out place.

In fact, up till nearly the hour of midnight, Archibald's career was a succession of sensations for Society and experiences for his partners. As for his own feelings, they were blissful even beyond his expectations, and as he had expected a good deal, no better testimonial could be imagined. His only disappointment was his third waltz with Julia, such a pretty girl and so sympathetic up to that point. In the course of the first two dances he had grown possibly even more intimate with her than with any of the other charming girls, and had almost made up his mind to become temporarily engaged, but now she actually insisted on sitting in a corner, which, though out of earshot, was in full view of the superfluous public.

"I want to talk sensibly this time," she said.

"My dear Julia," cried Archibald (he called all his enslavers by their Christian names), "the only time for talking sensibly is before breakfast on an extra rainy morning. Otherwise no healthy man is ever sensible enough to talk about it."

"Girls are different," said Julia; "when they become friends with a man they like to know something about him."

"Well," said Archibald, "I'll tell you all there is to know about me in two minutes. If you split the difference between forty-five years and five days you get a kind of average of my age. Add one and subtract the previous figure and you get the number of my ideas,

which simply consist of simple happiness; and as to how I made my pile—well, it was really done by another fellow, who made it by getting born of the proper parents, and then went bust under secret and sensational circumstances.”

“Went bust!” exclaimed Julia.

“Yes, and I’m one of the bits. So, what ho! for a quiet corner? The rest of my confessions are confidential.”

“I must speak to Dad for a moment first,” said Julia. “Wait for me here.”

“Gone to ask him whether it’s safe to say ‘Yes,’ on the strength of those revelations!” said Archibald to himself sagaciously. “This is a little too business-like for me. I think I’ll get engaged to some one else instead.”

When he received his daughter’s report, Mr. Muldevon seemed still unsatisfied.

“I might have a few words myself with Swinby,” said he. “He seems a decent sort of chap.”

When the next dance began he watched the various couples enter the ballroom, but there was no sign of the Antarctic Explorer among them. He wandered through the sitting-out retreats, but no Captain Swinby was there either. Then he tried the supper-room, and here at last he discovered the explorer very fortunately placed for a little conversation. He was, in fact, sitting quite alone in a corner with a bottle of champagne on the table before him, apparently deep in meditation.

“Hullo, Swinby!” cried Mr. Muldevon jovially. “On your own—eh?”

Captain Swinby rose rather carefully and deliberately, he noticed, and made him a solemn bow. Then in a slow, measured voice he said:

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"Sir, the champagne is our host's. Help yourself."

And with that he sat down again, somewhat suddenly.

It occurred at once to Mr. Muldevon that the opportunity was even more promising than he had ventured to hope. He sat down and filled his glass.

"Here's to ourselves!" he said, raising it.

"Sir," replied Captain Swinby with the same measured utterance, "I am drinking this bottle to my friend, Archie Fitzwyverne. It is the least I can do for him—the very least, Mr. — your name escapes me, but no matter. As I was saying, one bottle is the very least. In fact, one is not enough. This is the second."

"He is an old friend, I presume?" inquired Mr. Muldevon with a careless air.

"His age," replied the Captain profoundly, "is immy—immy—immyterial. You observe the word, sir? I chose it very, very, very carefully."

"I mean, you have known him a long time?" explained Mr. Muldevon.

Captain Swinby became gravely confidential.

"My friend Archie assures me, sir, he has known *me* a long time, but I 'sure him I was un'voidable detained from being present at his birth, which must have happened just when he says he met me."

The Captain smiled pleasantly, drained his glass and very slowly and carefully refilled it, and having recovered from the strain of this operation, smiled pleasantly again.

"Then you don't know much about his past career, eh?"

"I know where he came from," said Captain Swinby, "and as you seem intel'gent sort of genelman, I don't mind telling you."

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"Yes?" said Mr. Muldevon with an eagerness he hardly tried to dissemble.

Captain Swinby looked at him fixedly.

"You seem extr-ordinarily in'rested in my friend Archie," he observed.

"I've taken a fancy to him like yourself, Swinby."

The Captain held out his hand and solemnly shook Mr. Muldevon's.

"In that case, I hes'tate no longer. Mind you, I don't know 'xactly the name of the place, but—" he lowered his voice impressively—"it's where they keep the mad angels!"

"The what!" exclaimed Mr. Muldevon.

"Mad angels. That's my friend Archie exactly—Mad Angel."

Mr. Muldevon retired to ruminate on this information, and to judge from his expression it seemed as though he were not yet entirely relieved of anxiety.

Left again to his meditations, Captain Swinby gravely emptied his glass, inspected the bottle minutely (even holding it upside down over the carpet), and then rose with a sigh and took a couple of steps towards the door, to the vast interest of a group of waiters who stood watching his proceedings with technical eyes.

"I told you so!" said one of these experts, as the gentleman turned back again with a sorrowful air. "'E knows 'e can't do it!"

Dropping into his chair again, and burying his face in his hands, the distinguished Explorer murmured:

"This is absolutely won'erful!"

It was a dance or two later that Archibald, glowing

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with triumph and moist from his exertions, burst like a ray of glory into the supper-room.

"A glass of fizz from the tap!" he cried; "my throat's dry as a judge with proposing."

And then his eyes fell on his friend.

"Bring a bottle to this table!" he commanded, and threw himself into the chair opposite the Explorer.

"What's happened to you, Jack?" he asked; "I haven't bumped into you for the last six dances!"

His friend looked at him steadily and sadly.

"Archie, my dear, dear ol' friend," he replied, "the most won-erful and aston-shing pher—phernom'non has happened. I am drunk."

"Good bird!" said Archibald. "It's a wonderful happy feeling, isn't it?"

The Captain shook his head mournfully.

"My weakness," he sighed; "my dear ol' weakness! It hasn't faded, Archie. It has returned abs'lutely full of beans."

"Well," said Archibald, "that's a jolly healthy sign, let me tell you."

"You are mos' encouraging—mos' encouraging, Archie," replied the Explorer; "at the same time, I'm a man of the worl', and there are preju'ices against genel-men getting drunk. I have disgraced you, Archie!"

"Nonsense," cried Archibald; "nobody'll notice."

Captain Swinby shook his head still more mournfully.

"The contrast, Archie, the contras' between you so beastly sober, and me so bew—so bewlifully drunk, is too won'erfully striking, Archie."

"That's easily cured," said Archie, draining his glass and filling it again. "I'll get drunk, too."

His old friend held out his hand with an ecstatic smile.

"Jus' what I was going to suggest!" he exclaimed. "You have the insting of a sportsman and a genelman, Archie! And that being so, I see abs'lutely no reason why I shouldn't get a li'l bit drunker."

Throwing himself into his work with his usual ardour, Archibald was able to announce in about three minutes—

"I'm quite drunk enough, now, old bird!"

"And I'm distingly drunker," replied Captain Swinby.

"Then let's go home," suggested Archibald. "It's no good trying to dance on these revolving floors."

"Dance!" exclaimed the Captain, "' can't even walk on the beas'ly things."

"Waiter!" cried Archibald, and a sympathetic expert was instantly at his elbow. "Help this genelman to walk quite steadily and soberly into my car."

Captain Swinby reached the car after a progress through the mansion, which succeeded in eclipsing all the other sensations of the evening.

Not the least impressed of the spectators was Mr. Muldevon, whose kindness in assisting their progress was rewarded by a very eloquent speech of thanks on the doorstep, finishing with this surprising disclosure:

"My dear, dear old friend," said Archibald (who made the speech unassisted, the Captain being by this time asleep in the car), "in conclusion let me explain myself. Your lovely daughter wants t'know who I am. Tell her. John—I don't know your Christian name so I must jus' call you John—tell her, John, with my love, I'm a partner in a baronetcy, so if she wants to get engaged to me—well, there you are. Go' bless you!"

Looking much less enlightened than one would expect

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after such a particularly frank statement, Mr. Muldevon returned thoughtfully to the ballroom, where he was heard to express the opinion very emphatically, and with unmistakable feeling, that he had never been so d—d in his life.

Meanwhile in the green upholstered car Archibald with equal emotion was lamenting his incautious candour.

"Given myself away! Told old John all about my dreadful secret. No one will ask me to any more dances when they know I'm only that blighter Wyverne! A tragedy, old bird, jus' a horrid tragedy."

Discovering at last that the old bird was still fast asleep, he spent the next few minutes in gently rousing him, and by the time he was awake they had drawn up before the portals of the Chic.

With the assistance of Jehu the Captain was extricated and the two gentlemen were left on the pavement of Piccadilly to face the problem of an effective entrance. Under ordinary circumstances the steps were not numerous, steep or unsteady, nor did the revolving door present at all an impossible obstacle; but Captain Swinby's circumstances were not ordinary. Even Archibald's were a little unusual; and to add to the drama, as it was only just after midnight and the streets not yet empty; a small crowd was already collecting.

Fortunately Archibald was always inspired by a crowd, and this time his inspiration took one of its loftiest flights.

"I say, old bird," he said confidentially so that the crowd should not overhear, though as he happened inadvertently to shout his secret it was actually rewarded by a round of applause, "let's pretend we're polar bears and come in growling. That'll amuse 'em extraordinarily.

They'll never dream for one single instant you're drunk—jus' trying to be funny. Come on!"

"Mos' encouraging—mos' encouraging, Archie!" agreed the Captain.

Accordingly on their hands and knees the two polar bears slowly ascended the steps, and with the assistance of many willing spectators the glass door began to revolve. When it had revolved half-way round, the Grand Ducal party, which happened to be in the hall, were startled to catch a glimpse of what appeared to be a dark-coloured quadruped entangled in the door, though so vigorously did the assistants make it revolve that at the first attempt Archibald was whirled round onto the steps again.

The Captain being a heavier weight had more luck and made a very successful entrance, his growls being distinctly audible on the second floor. Archibald's second attempt resulted in an equally spectacular effect, and the picturesque flight of the Grand Ducal party as the two monsters roared their way to the lift left absolutely nothing to be desired.

"'Gratulations! Sim'ly ever and ever and ever and ever so many 'gratulations, old fellow!" said the Captain enthusiastically as the bears arose at last in the privacy of their room. (Archibald had considered it wiser the Captain should remain a quadruped in the lift.)

"Wasn't it a neat idea?" said Archibald, "and won't the old manager laugh to-morrow! I say, I strongly advise you to preten' you're a rat and sleep on the floor!"

Which he did.

JANE'S PRAYER

By LAURENCE HOUSMAN

When the new curate, Mr. Gedd,
Three Sunday mornings prayed for rain
And nothing happened, Johnnie said:
"I'm sure it's all because of Jane!"
A strange remark! Mamma enquired;
And Johnnie told, while Jane perspired.

"It's all her doing," he began.
"She hated him when first he came:
"Said she was sure no gentleman
"Would come with such a silly name."
Here Jane broke in with accents harsh—
"Or such an ugly red moustache!"

"And when he met us walking out,
"With only nurse instead of you,
"He winked and wagged his head about;
"Which was a silly thing to do.
"And when Jane bowed—just think of that!—
"He didn't even lift his hat.

"And so in church, to pay him out,
"Whatever prayer he begins,
"Jane prays the other way about,

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"And prays so fast she always wins:
"He prays for rain; and line by line
"She prays that it may still keep fine."

Oh, reader, could you, in your search
For wickedness beneath the sun,
Have dreamed that in a village church
Such deeds of darkness could be done?
What? The whole parish kept in drought,
Merely to pay the curate out!

But on the hearth domestic stands
A Judge whose ways are always wise;
See where Mamma, with lifted hands
And voice of indignation cries:
"O impious child, perfidious Jane,
"Kneel down at once and pray for rain!"

Jane knelt, and did as she was told;
And suddenly the vengeful skies
Grew black as ink; dark thunder rolled,
And much to poor Mamma's surprise,
In answer to her daughter's prayer
Rain-storm came spurtling through the air.

Jane paused amazed: "Oh, Ma," she cried,
"I never prayed as much as that!"
"Of course not," her Mamma replied,
"It's nothing, child, to wonder at.
"Do have a little commonsense!
"It is but a coincidence."

JANE'S PRAYER

But taught by hateful Mr. Gedd,

Jane would not have her faith denied;

And that night as she went to bed

And listened to the storm outside:

"I did pray hard!" she said to John;

"There is my rain still going on."

THE EEL

By GEORGE RESTON MALLOCH

ABOUT ten o'clock on a glorious May morning, Andrew McTochie, of Windy Mains Farm, emerged from the lane and paused on the high road for a moment to contemplate the view. It was a beautiful prospect that lay before him, bathed in sunshine. The high road ran straight as a die down to the valley of the Wimple Burn. On its upper side it was flanked by the well-cultivated fields that spoke of Andrew's skill as a farmer, and on the lower, by a slope of reedy pasture.

As he gazed with satisfaction at his two-acre field of oats on the bank of the Wimple, he was joined by Sandy McGrowther, the cattle dealer.

"Aye, ye've done no sae bad there, Andra," said Mr. McGrowther, knowing what was most likely to be the object of the other's gaze.

"No sae bad," admitted Mr. McTochie.

"We might just step alang tae the public and hae a wee hauf-yin," he suggested. Whereupon they turned their backs upon the prospect below and a few minutes later entered the local inn, where they spent more than an hour consuming successive "hauf-yins." Thus they missed such an exciting event as the passing of a stranger through the village.

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Mr. Peter Grant, O.B.E., had walked five miles from the local station for the particular purpose of enjoying the view. He had not looked on it for thirty years and it meant much to him, for it had been the scene of many boyish exploits and adventures.

Peter Grant had sought his fortune in the south, and had found it so abundantly that he now thought of retiring from business and buying an estate in the neighbourhood. But difficulties had arisen in connection with his purchase, owing to certain claims to mineral rights made by two neighbouring magnates, the Earl of Kilbagie and Sir John Blanecapple.

Grant had endeavoured to buy them out at a fair price, but the lawyers' negotiations had been fruitless; and Grant in his office in Lombard Street had thought them a couple of bloodsuckers, while they on their part had been heard to refer to him as a parsimonious moneylender who thought he was going to put a smart deal over the local hayseeds.

But the same rights were also a matter of dispute between Kilbagie and Blanecapple, and altogether it would have been hard to find any three men on that fine May morning less cordially disposed to one another. Grant had journeyed from London to beard Kilbagie and Blanecapple in their dens and thresh the matter out.

As he swung down the hill, Grant felt ridiculously young and happy. He loved this bit of country. There was the farm and there was the quarry on the hillside—still working, by Jove! And there, best of all, there was the old Wimple Burn, still purling along as of yore, down the hill, under the bridge and away through the reedy pasture.

Grant stopped to look over the parapet into the stream below, for was this not the stream of his boyish days in which he had caught minnows in a net, trout with a worm, and eels anyhow? But eels, he remembered, as he looked down into the familiar pool, were most excitingly caught by the process known as guddling, which consisted of wading up-stream or stepping from stone to stone and dislodging the prey by the hand or with a stick from under any likely stone or crevice. Your skilful guddler was able to seize the slippery eel in his hands and throw it to the bank.

As his thoughts ran back, a reminiscent look appeared in the eyes of this portly gentleman. He wondered, yes—he wondered whether eels were still as plentiful in the Wimple. Why shouldn't one have a look? Casting a careful glance up and down the road he satisfied himself that no one was in sight, left the bridge and walked down the bank of the burn.

Cautiously descending the steep bank, he found himself on the scene of a hundred memories. Something stirred in the pool, causing a slight swirl in the water, and an unwonted tingle of excitement ran through the frame of Mr. Peter Grant, O.B.E. He stepped cautiously on to a flat stone and gently inserted the top of his stick into a likely crevice.

As he did so he was startled by a voice which addressed him from the opposite bank. It was a rich and fruity voice and it said quite pleasantly:

“Hello, what on earth are you after?”

Looking up with a haste which almost unbalanced him, Grant saw a stout figure in plus fours surmounted by a highly coloured face, which in its turn was adorned by a

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fierce white moustache. He recognised, from the photographs in Society weeklies, that he had been taken at somewhat of a disadvantage by one of his enemies, by none other, in fact, than Sir John Blancapple. He did not feel entirely dignified, balancing himself precariously on a flat stone in midstream. He answered with an affectation of carelessness: "Oh—interested in natural history and that sort of thing. Studying eels."

"Eels, eh?" replied Sir John. "Suppose there are plenty there?"

"Used to be hundreds."

"You know the burn, then?"

"Rather. I used to guddle for eels and trout here when I was a kid."

"Eels, eh?" pursued Sir John reflectively. "Guddle for eels and trout, eh? Why, bless my soul, so did I, many a time. But," he added, "this wasn't the best place, you know."

"I'm not so sure about that," said Grant. "You see that crack in the rock there? There used to be dozens in that. Just you watch what happens when I put my stick in."

"Here, wait a moment," said Sir John hastily. "Let me get down." And he lowered himself down the bank in ponderous fashion.

Grant inserted the point of his stick. Nothing happened.

"I thought not," said the Baronet. "I'm pretty sure that's not the right place."

"I'm pretty sure it is," was the answer, "only this stick is too thick to get right back. Now, if I had a long twig, that would fetch them out."

A curious look dawned on Sir John's face. Slowly he produced a pocket-knife and solemnly cut a willow wand from the tree against which he was leaning. A slight excitement marked his countenance as he handed it to Grant. Grant inserted the twig. An eel shot out.

"By Jove! said the Baronet, and instinctively made a grab at the wriggling shape only to stub his fingers on the stone. Another and another followed until the lair was empty. Then both men laughed a little guiltily.

"Oh, I always knew there were some there," observed Sir John, "but I'd lay you any odds that there are far more in the round hole a little farther up. That's where I used to get them."

"Right," said Grant. "Suppose we try it? There's no one in sight," he added apologetically.

"Well, just out of curiosity," said the Baronet, who was really getting rather excited, and they clambered a little way up the bed of the stream till they came to a similar spot just below the bridge.

"I don't know this place so well," said Grant, "but I suppose it's that little pot-hole, you mean?"

"Yes, look here, let me have the twig this time. I think I remember the trick of it," said the owner of Blanecapple, and taking up his position on a stone in mid-stream, he proceeded to expel the tenants of the pot-hole.

Thirty years of London fell away like a cloak from the shoulders of Mr. Peter Grant, O.B.E., as elvers of all sizes began to dash from their place of concealment. His boyish instincts proved too strong for him and crouching down beside his companion, he made grab after

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grab at the slippery creatures and succeeded in tossing several to the bank.

Excitement is contagious, and Sir John, strangely delighted with his success, and at having demonstrated to the stranger his superior knowledge of the haunts of the eel in the Wimple Burn, leant forward to explore another recess with the twig. As he did so, he disturbed a monster eel. With a splash and a wriggle it made its way upstream to the shelter of the deep pool under the bridge.

"By Gad, sir!" exclaimed the Baronet, "did you see that?"

"A whopper," cried Grant.

"Four feet if it was an inch," said Sir John, who was not lacking in imaginative powers.

"I should have said four and a half," contested Grant.

"Let's see where he's gone," said the Baronet, stepping cautiously from stone to stone, followed by his companion. Balancing himself carefully, he crouched down and shading his eyes with one hand, peered into the murky depths of the pool before him. The Fourteenth Baronet of Blanecapple was a heavy man, and it was some forty years since he had tried to balance himself in a crouching position on a small stone in the middle of a burn. His feet suddenly shot out from under him, and he sat down heavily in six inches of water.

Now, it happened that some few minutes previously the ponderous gates of the domain of Kilbagie had been swung open to permit the egress of a Rolls-Royce car, at the wheel of which was seated no less a person than General, the Earl of Kilbagie. By his side, in a respectful attitude, sat Turner, his trusted head chauffeur. The car swung into the high road and purred softly down the

hill towards the bridge over the Wimple Burn. Its aristocratic owner was bound for a meeting of the local Territorial Association, and was in full uniform, plentifully be-medalled. As the car approached the bridge his lordship was surprised to observe two figures in somewhat peculiar attitudes in the bed of the burn. One of them seemed familiar.

"Looks like Blanecapple," said his lordship. "But who's the other?"

"I think, my lord," said Turner respectfully, "that it is undoubtedly Sir John Blanecapple. The other gentleman is, I think, a stranger."

As the car rolled silently up to the bridge the Earl's curiosity became too strong for him and, pulling up, he got out. He approached the parapet and, leaning over, was greeted by the astonishing spectacle of his dignified neighbour seated in mid-stream. The spectacle did not, however, displease him, for he considered that he had several little scores to pay off with Blanecapple; and he proceeded to take a mean advantage of his neighbour's situation.

"Why, what on earth, Blanecapple, are you doing in the middle of the burn?"

The Baronet, who was about to rise, suspended the difficult operation for a moment to glare at the interrupter.

"Confound it, sir," he said, with some acerbity, "it's my own burn, isn't it? A man may sit in his own burn if he likes, I suppose?"

"Quite, quite," responded the Earl of Kilbagie blandly, as the other heaved himself up. "Quite. I only wondered why you were doing it."

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"Why I am doing it?" shouted the Baronet angrily, and then finished somewhat lamely, for the explanation struck him as he gave it, as somewhat unequal to the situation. "We're after an eel."

"And what on earth," pursued the Earl with great interest, "do you want an eel for?"

"This isn't an eel," Grant put in, fearing that the Baronet was being tried too far. "It's not an ordinary eel—it's a monster!"

"A monster, eh?"

Now there must have been some magic bestowed by the invisible powers upon the word "eel" this bright May morning, for a reminiscent look, which by now was familiar to the Baronet and Grant, began to dawn in the eyes of Lord Kilbagie. Far, far away across the burning sands of India, across the Egyptian deserts and through the smoke of battle in France, General, the Earl of Kilbagie caught a glimpse of a small boyish figure, clad in a velvet suit, with a white lace collar, who had once been in the habit of escaping from nurses to hunt for monster eels in the Wimple Burn. He was silent for a moment.

"A monster, eh?"

"Five feet at least," said Grant.

"I should say seven," said the Baronet. "More like a conger than a fresh-water eel."

"I must have a look at this chap," said Lord Kilbagie, and coming round the end of the parapet, he descended the bank.

Meanwhile Fate was bringing another instrument upon the scene to aid in the perfecting of its design. A cart loaded with finely broken stone for road repair came lumbering slowly down the hill, the carter trudging by

the side of his horse. As it reached the bridge, the carter seeing the well-known Kilbagie car at rest and hearing a murmur of voices from somewhere, decided that he might as well pull up. He did so.

Lord Kilbagie, despite his distinguished position in the eyes of the county, was, after all, a man; that is to say, a rather carefully disguised boy. He joined the other two on the stones under the shadow of the bridge. The Baronet was on his knees peering into the pool.

"There he is, by Jove!"

Following his pointing finger, the Earl saw with some excitement the head of an enormous eel protruding from beneath a stone some eighteen inches under the surface.

"By Gad!" said his lordship, "he is a big fellow!"

"How the deuce are we to get him out, though?" asked Blaneapple anxiously.

"You can't. You'll never budge him from that stone," said the Earl.

"Can't!" snorted the Baronet. "We must and, by Gad, we shall! Are you going to let yourself be defied by an eel?"

Lord Kilbagie weakened.

"I don't see how you are going to do it though."

"Tell you what," said Grant. "If we only had a hook of some kind, we could bare-hook him—let it down under his chin, you know, and then jerk him out."

"That's a poacher's dodge," said the Earl doubtfully. "And anyway you haven't a hook."

"Has any one a tie-pin?" asked Grant. "We could twist it up, and I've got a bit of string in my pocket."

The Earl became suddenly aware that he was the only one of the three wearing a tie-pin. The others seemed

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to be looking at him with confidence. Reluctantly he undid the pin and handed it to Grant.

Grant had it bent into the shape of a hook and attached to his string in no time; so there was nothing for it but to kneel beside the Baronet and watch his attempts to beguile the eel into the belief that his chin was being tickled by a benevolent friend. Whether it was due to the lack of a barb or because it was too blunt, the operation met with no result.

It became obvious that the Baronet was a bungler.

"Let me have a shot at it," said the Earl of Kilbagie. And he had several shots with no better result.

"Ye'll no do it that way," said the voice of the carter who had now joined the group. "Man, the ony way tae get him oot o' that is tae get a grup on him roond the gills wi' a finger an' drag him oot."

The Baronet considered this for a moment and then, rolling up his sleeve, made the attempt. But after a confused struggle the eel suddenly shot away into farther deeps.

"We'll have to give it up," said the Earl with a feeling of relief.

"Dashed if we do!" said the Baronet. "I'll get that eel if I spend a week here."

It was at this moment that Turner intervened with fatal advice.

"Begging your lordship's pardon, but I have observed that the stream comes to a very narrow point immediately above the bridge, between two rocks. If we had a few boards, a temporary dam could easily be made there and then the removal of a few stones at this end would practically empty the pool."

"Good idea," exclaimed the Baronet. The Earl groaned. He knew Turner. Turner had served under him in the Royal Engineers, and Turner was never happier than when he was building a dam or inventing an excuse for some other engineering feat. Still, there it was. He couldn't desert Blanecapple at this crisis. General, the Earl of Kilbagie, took charge of the operations.

"Ye havena a board," objected the carter.

"What's the matter with the backboard of your cart, my man?" demanded the General.

"Ma load wad slip oot if ye took that aff."

"Nonsense. Unhitch the horse and let the cart down on its shafts."

Now the word of Kilbagie was law unto the carter. The horse was released and the cart tipped forward as directed. Turner and the carter climbed down with the board and proceeded to fix it in the required position.

"That'll dae fine," said the carter, who was beginning to enjoy himself. "It's got kin' o' wedged in a bit crack. Naethin'll stir yon." This was truer than any one supposed. But the bottom of the burn was far from level, and it was soon evident that the bulk of the stream was escaping beneath the improvised dam.

"It wants backing of some kind," said the General.

"A load of macadam would serve the purpose very well, your lordship," suggested Turner tentatively.

"Here—" began the carter, but quailed before the light of battle in the General's eye.

"Take hold of the shafts and back the cart to the water's edge," rapped out the General.

Willing hands carried out the command.

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"Tip it in!" They tipped it in. With a mighty splash the load of macadam descended on the water. It fell well and truly against the board, and in a moment the slackened flow made it apparent that here was at least a temporarily effective dam.

The carter was told off to strengthen it by the addition of a layer of sods, and well pleased with the result of their efforts, the rest of the party now returned to the other side of the bridge where, by deepening the exit of the pool, they very soon had reduced the depth of water considerably. This operation took some little time, however, and then the eel had to be rediscovered. When it was at last located, Turner was placed at the now narrow exit to cut off any attempt at escape, while the Baronet and Grant, in their shirt-sleeves, began a long series of attempts to "get a grup" on the gills of the elusive and slippery fish.

From stone to stone, from end to end of the pool dashed the eel. Again and again eager fingers closed on a slimy body only to feel it escape them. The combat was heroic, and the human combatants, egged on by the advice and direction of Lord Kilbagie, who had chosen a comparatively dry point of vantage, soon became almost as wet and slimy as the eel. The minutes flew unnoticed until the contest was interrupted at last by the appearance of the carter. There was something like a grin on the man's face.

"Man," he stuttered as he joined the group under the bridge, "if yon sicht disna' fair ding a'!"

"What sight?" demanded the Earl.

"Weel, ma loard, the sicht o' a wheen o' ducks sailin' about Andra McTochie's prize oats."

"What do you mean? Ducks in the oats? What's that got to do with us?" said the Baronet, looking up in astonishment.

"Aweel, ye see, Sir John," said the man with a chuckle, "ye're bit dam has made the burnie rin owre its bank intae Andra's oat-field."

"McTochie's prize oats!" gasped the dismayed Baronet. Andrew was his tenant.

"McTochie's oats!" said the Earl, who was president of the local Farmers' Association. "This must be stopped!" Hastily he led the way back to the dam. A terrible sight met their eyes. McTochie's cherished field was rapidly becoming a lake, and to add to the horror of the scene, McTochie's ducks, no doubt attracted from the burn by the pleasing prospect, were sailing calmly about and grubbing up bunches of the young stuff with every sign of enjoyment.

The Earl groaned and the Baronet with him. They knew Andrew McTochie.

"We must shift the dam at once," commanded Lord Kilbagie.

"You'll hae a job tae dae that," said the carter as a man who knew.

However, he descended with Turner and endeavoured to dislodge the barrier. Their efforts were in vain even with the assistance of Grant and the Baronet.

"Ye'll never shift yon," repeated the carter.

"I'm very much afraid, your lordship," said Turner, "that the man is right."

"Something must be done," snapped the Earl despairingly.

"Yes, my lord," replied Turner respectfully. "If we

only had a hand-grenade now, we might blow the whole thing up in a jiffy."

"But we haven't got one, damn it, man!"

Here the carter intervened.

"Am thinkin', ma loard, that Mr. Turner's richt. Noo, if we wis tae pit a bit stick o' blasting pouthier aneath yin o' they big stanes, we micht shift the whole thing."

"Quite, quite, my man," responded his lordship irritably, "but we haven't got any blasting powder; and if we had, we should want a fuse."

"Maybe we've got baith," said the carter darkly. "The fac' is A borrowed a wee bittie frae McAndrew up at the quarry for to blow up yon big tree on ma allotment. Noo, if nae questions are to be asked as to hoo A cam' by it, A wouldn't refuse it."

A light of relief dawned upon the faces of the Earl and the Baronet. They assured the carter that no questions would be asked and that the matter of a reward might even be considered, if he and Turner would quickly lay the mine and fuse. This did not take very long to do.

But unfortunately it was at this moment that the fourteenth Baronet of Blancapple remembered that he had been defied by an eel, and at his urgent entreaty the firing of the fuse was delayed in order to give him a last chance of getting "a grup" on the gills of his enemy, for which purpose he left the others and retired beneath the bridge.

We must now return to Andrew McTochie and to the kitchen of Windy Mains Farm, where he burst in upon his astonished wife, pale and shaking and smelling strongly of the refreshment which he had been consuming in company with his friend, the cattle-dealer.

"Mirren," he cried. "Am A seeing richt? For as

sure as A've twa een in ma heid when A come up the road to the hoose the noo, A saw a wheen of white duck swimmin' about on the twa-acre oats."

Mirren sniffed the air suspiciously.

"It's well seen where you've been, Andra," she replied, going on with her baking. "Aye, you'll have got it at last just as the Meenister has warned ye time and again. Ducks swimmin' in the oat-field, indeed! Na, na, Andra—the ducks you've seen are swimmin' in the whusky you've been drinkin. It's a judgment on ye."

Andrew groaned and staggered from the kitchen. He knew well that he had taken more than was good for him and he asked himself with horror if the minister's warning of delirium tremens might have come true at last. But in his half-drunken condition he conceived the idea of putting the matter to test, and, taking down his gun from the wall, he staggered forth and made for the two-acre field.

"Ducks," he muttered to himself. "Aye, there's ducks right enough and every yin of them a double duck, sae far as I can see. Aye, and there's men there and every yin of them a double man. Double or single A'll test it. A'll let fly wi' baith barrels into the midst o' them. If they're ducks they'll flee, if they're men they'll rin. If they dinna flee and dinna rin, then they're no there. And Andrew McTochie's got the D.T.'s at last. Aye, that's what it comes to."

So communing with himself Mr. McTochie staggered deviously towards the phantom lake.

Such is the spirit of comradeship which all true sport inspires in its devotees, that Lord Kilbagie was chatting amicably with the carter, from whom he had just bor-

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rowed a wax vesta to light his cheroot, when the conversation was suddenly interrupted by Turner, who in the excitement of the moment fell into old military habits and, drawing himself stiffly to attention, saluted smartly as he addressed the General, the Earl of Kilbagie.

"Beg pardon, sir," said Turner, "but I fear that we are about to come under fire from the field on the left."

The startled Earl looked up and saw the drunken figure of McTochie brandishing a gun and shouting what sounded like threats.

"Good Lord!" said the Earl. "The man's drunk."

"Aye, he's fou'," said the carter, "and he means mischief wi' that gun."

"Tut, tut," said his lordship. "He'd never dare to shoot."

"When Andra's fou' there's no saying whit he wouldna dae, ma loard," said the carter earnestly. "We's best all git aneath the brig till we see whit he does."

Now his lordship had just struck the wax match when the carter thus addressed him, and as he listened and stared at the advancing figure of McTochie, he dropped it with a hasty exclamation. In the excitement of the moment no one noticed that it had fallen close to the end of the fuse, and Grant and Turner, adding their advice to that of the carter, half persuaded and half dragged Lord Kilbagie across the road and under the shelter of the bridge, where they were concealed from the advancing McTochie. That worthy, who had been engaged looking to the loading of his gun, saw with astonishment when he raised his eyes again that those figures which he had taken for solid men had vanished from the face of the earth. His knees shook beneath him with terror.

"Vanished clean aff the airth," he muttered. "Aye, maybe they wisna there, but they bluidy double ducks is still there, swimmin' about whaur ma oats wis growin'. A'll test them at ony rate."

And raising his gun he took unsteady aim and discharged both barrels. The shot flew wide over their mark. The ducks remained undisturbed, but almost simultaneously with the discharge of the gun a dull roar smote upon McTochie's ears, and he saw rising, apparently out of the burn, a dark column of smoke and flame, mingled with flying fragments of stone and wood.

For the moment he stood transfixed. Then, casting down his gun, he gave a yell of horror, turned about and fled. Running as fast as his condition would permit, he avoided his own house and did not stop till he burst through the gates of the manse and appeared before the astonished minister, imploring in a faint voice that he might be permitted to sign the pledge immediately. The minister did not pause to inquire into the cause of this signal act of grace. In two minutes Andrew had signed his name; and it may be recorded here that from that moment he was a reformed character and never touched drink again.

We must now return to the group sheltering beneath the bridge. Their first impression was that McTochie had somehow contrived to fire a six-inch shell from his gun. Then they saw the dam go up in the air and a wave of yellow water descending upon them. It was just at that moment that the Baronet had at last succeeded in getting a "grup" upon the gills of the elusive eel; but before he or any of the others could collect their senses the wave hit the bridge, foamed through it, and emerged

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on the other side bearing with it the struggling figures of General, the Earl of Kilbagie, Sir John Blanecapple, Mr. Peter Grant, O.B.E., the eminent financier, Turner, and the carter.

As the others gradually stranded, they saw borne past them on the flood the form of Blanecapple, submerged save for one arm which brandished, like another Excalibur, a struggling eel, firmly gripped by the gills between finger and thumb. As the Baronet's dripping and portly figure arose from the subsiding waters, the eely mind apparently conceived the idea that now or never must a stroke be made for liberty. And as the Baronet began a triumphal shout of "I've got the beggar!" the eel with one dexterous twist fastened itself securely round his neck, choking further utterance.

"Holy Moses! Oh, holy Moses—for God's sake, you fellows, take this thing off!" shrieked Blanecapple, relaxing his grip in the horror of the moment.

But the others were now rolling about on the bank paralysed with laughter which was not lessened when the eel, seeing an open mouth before its eyes, promptly sought refuge by inserting its head therein.

With a wild shriek Blanecapple cast the slimy thing from him and it disappeared down the current of the Wimple, where it may be living happily to this day.

Peter Grant mopped his eyes at last and said, still weak with laughter: "What a day! I've enjoyed nothing so much since I was a kid, or my name is not Peter Grant."

Kilbagie and Blanecapple stared at him.

"Peter Grant!" they gasped simultaneously.

"Yes," said Peter. "Fact is, I came down here to talk it all over with you two!"

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"To talk it over!" said the Earl of Kilbagie.

"Yes," said Peter, "to talk it over."

"Talk it over lunch at Kilbagie, you mean," said his lordship after a moment.

"Not a bad idea," said the Baronet. And Peter agreed.

FOUR LITTLE CHILDREN

By E. LEAR

ONCE upon a time, a long while ago, there were four little people whose names were Violet, Slingsby, Guy and Lionel; and they all thought they would like to see the world. So they bought a large boat to sail quite round the world by sea, and then they were to come back on the other side by land. The boat was painted blue with green spots, and the sail was yellow with red stripes; and when they set off, they only took a small Cat to steer and look after the boat, besides an elderly Quangle-Wangle, who had to cook the dinner and make the tea; for which purpose they took a large kettle.

For the first ten days they sailed on beautifully, and found plenty to eat, as there were lots of fish, and they had only to take them out of the sea with a long spoon, when the Quangle-Wangle instantly cooked them, and the Pussy-Cat was fed with the bones, with which she expressed herself happy on the whole, so that all the party were quite happy.

During the day-time Violet chiefly occupied herself in putting salt-water into a churn, while her three brothers churned it violently, in the hope that it would turn into butter, which it seldom, if ever, did; and in the evening they all retired into the Tea-kettle, where they managed

to sleep very comfortably, while Pussy and the Quangle-Wangle managed the boat.

After a time they saw some land at a distance; and when they came to it, they found it was an island made of water quite surrounded by earth. Besides that, it was bordered by evanescent isthmuses with a great Gulf-stream running about all over it, so that it was perfectly beautiful, and contained only a single tree, 503 feet high.

When they had landed, they walked about, but found to their great surprise that the island was quite full of veal-cutlets and chocolate-drops, and nothing else. So they all climbed up the single high tree to discover, if possible, if there were any people; but having remained on the top of the tree for a week, and not seeing anybody, they naturally concluded that there were no inhabitants, and accordingly when they came down they loaded the boat with two thousand veal-cutlets and a million of chocolate-drops, and these afforded them sustenance for more than a month, during which time they pursued their voyage with the utmost delight and apathy.

After this they came to a shore where there were no less than sixty-five great red parrots with blue tails, sitting on a rail all of a row, and all fast asleep. And I am sorry to say that the Pussy-Cat and the Quangle-Wangle crept softly and bit off the tail-feathers of all the sixty-five parrots for which Violet reproved them both severely.

Notwithstanding which she proceeded to insert all the feathers, 260 in number, in her bonnet, thereby causing it to have a lovely and glittering appearance, highly prepossessing and efficacious.

The next thing that happened to them was in a narrow part of the sea, which was so entirely full of fishes that

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the boat could go on no further ; so they remained there about six weeks, till they had eaten nearly all the fishes, which were Soles, and all ready cooked and covered with shrimp sauce so that there was no trouble whatever. And as the few fishes who remained uneaten complained of the cold as well as of the difficulty they had in getting any sleep on account of the extreme noise made by the Arctic Bears and the Tropical Turnspits, which frequented the neighbourhood in great numbers, Violet most sensibly knitted a small woollen frock for several of the fishes ; and Slingsby administered some opium drops to them, through which kindness they became quite warm and slept soundly.

Then they came to a country which was wholly covered with immense Orange trees of a vast size, and quite full of fruit. So they all landed, taking with them the Tea-kettle, intending to gather some of the Oranges and place them in it. But while they were busy about this, a most dreadfully high wind rose, and blew out most of the parrot-tail feathers from Violet's bonnet. That, however, was nothing compared to the calamity of the Oranges falling down on their heads by millions and millions, which thumped and bumped, and bumped and thumped them all so seriously that they were obliged to run as hard as they could for their lives ; besides that the sound of the Oranges rattling on the Tea-kettle was of the most fearful and amazing nature.

Nevertheless they got safely to the boat, although considerably vexed and hurt ; and the Quangle-Wangle's foot was so knocked about that he had to sit with his head in his slipper for at least a week.

This event made them all for a time rather melancholy,

and perhaps they might never have become less so, had not Lionel, with a most praiseworthy devotion and perseverance, continued to stand on one leg and whistle to them in a loud and lively manner, which diverted the whole party so extremely, that they gradually recovered their spirits, and agreed that whenever they should reach home they would subscribe towards a testimony to Lionel, entirely made of gingerbread and raspberries, as an earnest token of their sincere and grateful infection.

After sailing on calmly for several more days, they came to another country, where they were much pleased and surprised to see a countless multitude of white Mice with red eyes, all sitting in a great circle, slowly eating Custard Pudding with the most satisfactory and polite demeanour.

And as the four Travellers were rather hungry, being tired of eating nothing but Soles and Oranges for so long a period, they held a council as to the propriety of asking the Mice for some of their pudding in a humble and affecting manner, by which they could hardly be other than gratified. It was agreed therefore that Guy should go and ask the Mice, which he immediately did; and the result was that they gave a Walnut-shell only half full of Custard diluted with water. Now, this displeased Guy, who said, "Out of such a lot of pudding as you have got, I must say you might have spared a somewhat larger quantity!" But no sooner had he finished speaking than all the Mice turned round at once, and sneezed at him in an appalling and vindictive manner (and it is impossible to imagine a more scroobious sound than that caused by the simultaneous sneezing of many millions of angry mice) so that Guy rushed back to the boat, having first

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shied his cap into the middle of the Custard Pudding, by which means he completely spoiled the Mice's dinner.

By-and-by the Four Children came to a country where there were no houses, but only an incredibly innumerable number of large bottles without corks, and of a dazzling and sweetly susceptible blue colour. Each of these blue bottles contained a Blue-Bottle Fly, and all these interesting animals live continually together in the most copious and rural harmony, nor perhaps in many parts of the world is such perfect and abject happiness to be found. Violet, and Slingsby, and Guy, and Lionel, were greatly struck with this singular and instructive settlement, and having previously asked permission of the Blue-Bottle-Flies (which was most courteously granted), the boat was drawn up to the shore, and they proceeded to make tea in front of the bottles; but as they had no tea-leaves, they merely placed some pebbles in the hot water, and the Quangle-Wangle played some tunes over it on an Accordion, by which of course tea was made directly, and of the very best quality.

The Four Children then entered into conversation with the Blue-Bottle-Flies, who discoursed in a placid and genteel manner, though with a slightly buzzing accent, chiefly owing to the fact that they each held a small clothes-brush between their teeth, which naturally occasioned a fuzzy extraneous utterance.

"Why," said Violet, "would you kindly inform us, do you reside in bottles? And if in bottles at all, why not rather in green or purple, or indeed in yellow bottles?"

To which questions a very aged Blue-Bottle-Fly answered, "We found the bottles here all ready to live in, that is to say, our great-great-great-great-grand-

fathers did, so we occupied them at once. And when the winter comes on, we turn the bottles upside-down, and consequently rarely feel the cold at all, and you know very well that this could not be the case with bottles of any other colour than blue."

"Of course it could not," said Slingsby; "but if we may take the liberty of enquiring, on what do you chiefly subsist?"

"Mainly on Oyster-patties," said the Blue-Bottle-Fly, "and when these are scarce, on Raspberry Vinegar and Russian leather boiled down to a jelly."

"How delicious!" said Guy.

To which Lionel added, "Huzz!" and all the Blue-Bottle-Flies said "Buzz!"

At this time, an elderly Fly said it was the hour for the Evening-Song to be sung; and on a signal being given all the Blue-Bottle-Flies began to buzz at once in a sumptuous and sonorous manner, the melodious and mucilaginous sounds echoing all over the waters, and resounding across the tumultuous tops of the transitory Titmice upon the intervening and verdant mountains, with a serene and sickly suavity only known to the truly virtuous. The Moon was shining slobaciously from the star-bespangled sky, while her light irrigated the smooth and shiny sides and wings and backs of the Blue-Bottle-Flies with a peculiar and trivial splendour, while all nature responded to the cerulæan and conspicuous circumstances.

In many long-after years, the four little Travellers looked back to that evening as one of the happiest in all their lives, and it was already past midnight, when—the sail of the boat having been set up by the Quangle-Wangle, the Tea-Kettle and Churn placed in their respec-

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tive positions, and the Pussy-Cat stationed at the helm—the Children each took a last and affectionate farewell of the Blue-Bottle-Flies, who walked down in a body to the water's edge to see the Travellers embark.

As a token of parting respect and esteem, Violet made a curtsy quite down to the ground, and stuck one of her few remaining Parrot-tail feathers into the back hair of the most pleasing of the Blue-Bottle-Flies, while Slingsby, Guy, and Lionel offered them three small boxes, containing respectively Black Pins, Dried Figs, and Epsom Salts: and thus they left that happy shore forever.

Overcome by their feelings, the four little Travellers instantly jumped into the Tea-Kettle, and fell fast asleep. But all along the shore for many hours there was distinctly heard a sound of severely suppressed sobs, and a vague multitude of living creatures using their handkerchiefs in a subdued simultaneous snuffle—lingering sadly along the walloping waves, as the boat sailed farther and farther away from the Land of the Happy Blue-Bottle-Flies.

Nothing particular occurred for some days after these events, except that as the Travellers were passing a low tract of sand, they perceived an unusual and gratifying spectacle, namely, a large number of Crabs and Crawfish—perhaps six or seven hundred—sitting by the waterside, and endeavouring to disentangle a vast heap of pale pink worsted, which they moistened at intervals with a fluid composed of Lavender-water and White-wine Negus.

“Can we be of any service to you, O crusty Crabbies?” said the Four Children.

“Thank you kindly,” said the Crabs, consecutively.

"We are trying to make some worsted Mittens, but do not know how."

On which Violet, who was perfectly acquainted with the art of mitten-making, said to the Crabs, "Do your claws unscrew, or are they fixtures?"

"They are all made to unscrew," said the Crabs, and forthwith they deposited a great pile of claws close to the boat, with which Violet uncombed all the pale pink worsted, and then made the loveliest Mittens with it you can imagine. Then the Crabs, having resumed and screwed on their claws, placed the mittens cheerfully upon their wrists, and walked away rapidly, on their hind legs, warbling songs with a silvery voice and in a minor key.

After this the four little people sailed on again till they came to a vast and wide plain of astonishing dimensions, on which nothing whatever could be discovered at first; but as the Travellers walked onward, there appeared in the extreme and dim distance a single object, which on a nearer approach, and on an accurately cutaneous inspection, seemed to be somebody in a large white wig sitting on an arm-chair made of Sponge Cake and Oyster-shells. "It does not quite look like a human being," said Violet doubtfully; nor could they make out what it really was, till the Quangle-Wangle (who had previously been round the world) exclaimed softly in a loud voice, "It is the Co-operative Cauliflower!"

And so in truth it was, and they soon found that what they had taken for an immense wig was in reality the top of the cauliflower, and that he had no feet at all, being able to walk tolerably well with a fluctuating and graceful movement on a single cabbage stalk, an accom-

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plishment which naturally saved him the expense of stockings and shoes.

Presently, while the whole party from the boat was gazing at him with mingled affection and disgust, he suddenly arose, and in a somewhat plumbdomphious manner hurried off towards the setting sun—his steps supported by two superincumbent confidential cucumbers, and a large number of Waterwagtails proceeding in advance of him by three-and-three in a row—till he finally disappeared on the brink of the western sky in a crystal cloud of sudorific sand.

So remarkable a sight of course impressed the Four Children very deeply; and they returned immediately to their boat with a strong sense of undeveloped asthma and a great appetite.

Shortly after this the Travellers were obliged to sail directly below some high overhanging rocks, from the top of one of which a particularly odious little boy, dressed in rose-coloured knickerbockers, and with a pewter plate upon his head, threw an enormous Pumpkin at the boat, by which it was instantly upset.

But this upsetting was of no consequence, because all the party knew how to swim very well, and in fact they preferred swimming about till after the moon rose, when, the water growing chilly, they sponge-taneously entered the boat. Meanwhile the Quangle-Wangle threw back the Pumpkin with immense force, so that it hit the rocks where the malicious little boy in rose-coloured knickerbockers was sitting, when, being quite full of Lucifer-matches, the Pumpkin exploded surreptitiously into a thousand bits, whereon the rocks instantly took fire, and the odious little boy became unpleasantly hotter and

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hotter and hotter, till his knickerbockers were turned quite green, and his nose was burned off.

Two or three days after this had happened they came to another place where they found nothing at all except some wide and deep pits full of Mulberry Jam. This is the property of the tiny Yellow-nosed Apes who abound in these districts, and who store up the Mulberry Jam for their food in winter, when they mix it with pellucid, pale, periwinkle soup, and serve it out in Wedgwood China bowls, which grow freely all over that part of the country. Only one of the Yellow-nosed Apes was on the spot, and he was fast asleep: yet the Four Travellers and the Quangle-Wangle and Pussy were so terrified by the violence and sanguinary sound of his snoring, that they merely took a small cupful of the Jam, and returned to re-embark in their boat without delay.

What was their horror on seeing the boat (including the Churn and the Tea-kettle) in the mouth of an enormous Seeze Pyder, an aquatic and ferocious creature truly dreadful to behold, and happily only met with in these excessive longitudes. In a moment the beautiful boat was bitten into fifty-five-thousand-million-hundred-billion bits; and it instantly became quite clear that Violet, Slingsby, Guy, and Lionel could no longer preliminate their voyage by sea.

The Four Travellers were therefore obliged to resolve on pursuing their wanderings by land, and very fortunately there happened to pass by at that moment an elderly Rhinoceros, on which they seized; and all four mounting on his back, the Quangle-Wangle sitting on his horn and holding on by his ears, and the Pussy-Cat swinging at the end of his tail, they set off, having only four small beans

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and three pounds of mashed potatoes to last through their whole journey.

They were, however, able to catch numbers of the chickens and turkeys and other birds who incessantly alighted on the head of the Rhinoceros for the purpose of gathering the seeds of the rhododendron plants which grew there, and these creatures they cooked in a most translucent and satisfactory manner, by means of a fire lighted on the end of the Rhinoceros's back. A crowd of Kangaroos and Gigantic Cranes accompanied them, from feelings of curiosity and complacency, so that they were never at a loss for company, and went onward as it were in a sort of profuse and triumphant procession.

Thus, in less than eighteen weeks, they all arrived safely at home, where they were received by their admiring relatives with joy tempered with contempt; and where they finally resolved to carry out the rest of their travelling plans at some more favourable opportunity.

As for the Rhinoceros, in token of their grateful adherence, they had him killed and stuffed directly, and then set him up outside the door of their father's house as a Diaphanous Doorscraper,

DIALOGUE WITH A SOLDIER

By A. NIEL LYONS

I

THE lonely and long-suffering reader has probably observed that Clara possesses certain dominative qualities.

Behold me, then, in the small saloon of the Seven Stars Hotel, shaking hands with a very large and very oscillatory soldier.

The soldier, having regarded me long and unsteadily with a badly matched pair of moist eyes, sat down upon the edge of a bagatelle board and grabbed successfully at the ragged end of a moustache.

He examined the inside of his cuff, as if in search of something which it ought to contain, and not finding it, dispassionately applied the rim of his cuff to the moister of the eyes. He then produced, from the neighbourhood of his left ear, a small fragment of cigarette, to the end of which he ultimately transferred a sullen spark. He then spoke again.

"Go on, cough it up!"

"The London lawyers have sent me here to acquaint you with the occurrence of a pleasing domestic incident."

"That ain't what they wrote. What is it, anyhow? Say it in English."

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"I'm sent here to tell you," I then replied, "that you are the father of a healthy, handsome little girl."

"Little girl?" repeated the soldier. "What little girl?"

"Your little girl. Your little baby. Amy Birch's little baby."

"Hoy!" cried the soldier. "It's a lie. They may call me a plumber's mate if they want to, but nobody ain't gointer call me *dirty* names. Amy Birch, do ye say? Why, that's the one what 'opped it with the fireman. Kate 'er name was, or Rosie."

I stared at the soldier, rather puzzled. "Amy Birch," I repeated.

"Rosie," he insisted. "Or," he added, "was it Maudie? That's right: Maudie. Her name was Maudie, and she come from Newcastle."

I said to the soldier: "I don't quite follow you."

The soldier who had closed his eyes, opened them with difficulty. "What was we talking about?" he enquired.

"This—er—domestic incident: the . . . little girl," I hinted.

"Little girl!" repeated the soldier. "Ah! Anne? Good old Anne? Well—what *of* her?"

The soldier's face assumed a turbulent expression; but I noticed that he did not attempt to let go of the bagatelle board.

"What of it?" he repeated.

"Isn't that for you to say?" suggested your servant.

"Me to say?" cried the soldier. "All right, then. I'll tell you the truth—you bein' a gentleman. This Anne then (or was it Kate? blow me if I kin remember), she was walking out wiv me the time I 'ad to go to quod

for 'itting the coastguardsman. That was all along of a girl named Mary, what I used to be sweet on before I set eyes on Nell. Did I tell you about Nell, young man? No? Well, then, I *will*. I'll tell you the truth about Nell. They may call me a plumber's 'elp, begad, but I wouldn't tell no lies about old Nell. That's why I struck the fireman. 'E wanted to make me out a liar. I told 'im straight! I says: ' 'Er name is Maudie, and she comes from Newcastle.' With that I struck 'im, and Maggie Dawson see me do it, and she wouldn't never speak to me again."

The summoning of these somewhat incohesive spirits from the past was a process evidently not enlivening to the soldier's spirits. He sighed protractedly, frowned and groped emotionally, persistently, ineffectively, for the ragged end of his moustache.

"Mind you this, ole lad," he then said, "the people may say what they like about my Maggie, but she was a rare good girl at 'ome; a rare good daughter to 'er pore ole dad—'im what I sloshed for reading my letters. A party name of Caroline, was me *sweet'art* at the time but Maggie was the girl I always cared for. She married ole Solomon, the bottle-hawker. Theer 'e sat—I kin see 'im now, in a little broken rocking-chair, aside of the kitching window. I couldn't lay 'ands on a 'unch-back, so I says to him: 'God bless you, old son; be good to 'er.' And I says to 'er: 'Susan,' I says, 'he's yourn.' Poor Susan! She and Maggie, they couldn't thank me for tears! But Maggie was the girl for my fancy!"

Again, somehow, I seemed to have lost touch with the soldier's argument. "But I thought you were talking about Maggie all the time," I said.

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"Not *all* the time," replied the soldier.

"Who was the girl who married the hunchback, then?"

"Her name," replied the soldier, "was Maudie, and she came from Newcastle. . . . I married Maudie, once upon a time."

"You are a married man, then, Mr. Foggis?" I suggested mildly.

"What liar told you that?" demanded the soldier, smiting the bagatelle board with his fist.

"I thought you told me so."

"Well, what of it?" submitted the soldier. "Can't I tell you what I like? Answer me that! . . . I was a good 'usband to poor Sal, at any rate—better'n any of the others."

"Sal?" I repeated.

"Sal 'oo?" inquired the soldier.

"*The* Sal," I stated firmly, after a moment's pause for thought. Then, adopting a bold offensive: "Pull yourself together, and tell me clearly which one you *did* marry, Sal or Maudie."

"You 'ave acted that gentlemanly in your be'aviour," said the soldier, "that I don't mind telling you the truth about it all. They may call me a plumber's assistant, they may call me ignorant, but I do know a gentleman when I sees one. . . . Shake hands, laddie!"

We shook hands. "Now tell me all about it," I insisted.

"Tell you all about it? Well, why not, laddie? Me and 'er, we was pals in the old days, see? In the old, old days, if you understand me—'er being cousins with the girl Mary, what I done time for when I stunned the fish-porter. Arrybeller, she was a jealous-like, being young

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and 'igh-spirited, and so, before I could say a word to the contrary, she fetches me a clip be'ind the ear. . . . Ah me, laddie! We was young and foolish then."

"And so," I suggested, "you married Arabella."

"She said I did," replied the soldier, with a sombre frown. "She said a lot more things than ever *I* should like to soil my lips with."

"You also married Maudie?"

"Of course," assented the soldier, "*she* came from Newcastle."

"And Sal? You married Sal, likewise?" I was sorry to inconvenience the soldier, but the terms of my commission forced me to pursue this matter rather closely.

The soldier who showed signs of relapsing into torpor, assented even to this suggestion. He said: "Whatever you say is right, old lad."

"Maudie, Arabella, Sal," I mused. "Any more?"

"Any more what?" demanded the soldier.

"Any more wives."

The soldier, who had gradually extended his small holding on the bagatelle board, now assumed a recumbent posture, and droned forth the following stave or snatch, pertaining to a ballad of the people:

"Wives, wives,
Joy of our lives
Where would the money go
But for the wives?"

"Good-night all," added the soldier, pulling his cap over his eyes.

I took the liberty of shaking him. "How many times have you been married?" I demanded.

DIALOGUE WITH A SOLDIER

The soldier sat up and rubbed his eyes. "That's a funny question, ain't it?" he enquired. "Take me for a blooming almanack?"

"Surely you can count your own wives?" I persisted.

"Wives, wives," echoed the soldier, "not so much of your 'wives.' I broke a beggar's collar-bone once for talking rot about wives. What's your opinion about wives?"

"The same as yours," I replied. . . . "What did the other fellow say?"

"I 'ands 'im a letter to look at across the counter," responded Mr. Foggis, "and 'e says to me, 'e says, 'You are a liar,' 'e says; ' 'er name is Maudie, and she comes from Newcastle.' "

"Whereas," I suggested, wishing to help and hasten him, "her name was really something quite different."

"*Quite* different," assented the warrior; "'er name was Emmaline. It was Emmaline's name as was Maudie."

This, of course, explained it all. "Therefore," I ventured to suppose, "you are now at liberty to fulfil your obligations to Amy."

"Which Amy?" said the soldier.

"Amy Birch, the mother of your little girl. She's very poor, and babies have to be fed, you know."

"Poor old Amy," mused the soldier, again becoming drowsy, "she was a bonny girl. They may call me a plumber, begad, but I knows a bonny female when I sees one. . . . dear old Maudie."

"Meaning Amy," I suggested.

Mr. Foggis at once woke up, and resumed a slightly unstable perpendicular; also, his face grew exceedingly flushed.

"Don't *you* go for to put no larks on me," he shouted. "'Er name, I tell you, is Maudie. I take the lie from no man. That's what I told the bloke in the oyster shop before 'e lost 'is memory."

"Good!" I exclaimed, with tact. "Now let's talk about Amy."

"Amy," repeated the soldier. "Ah! Sweet Amy Wilson. Ah! There was an awful row in Murphy Street the night poor Amy died. Three on 'em went to 'orspital. They said we wasn't married, the dirty dogs, and me standin' there on the doorstep with the stiffcut in me 'ands. And that," pursued the soldier, with a further access of choler, "is just the ruddy sting of it. It weren't no business of their'n if I did walk out with Isabel. There was Fanny, as worked in the pickle factory, went out with me o' Saturdays, and Ethel, as were me sweetheart at the time; she never told them nothing, and yet——"

"Oh, never mind the past," I interjected, "let us now talk about the present, Mr. Foggis. What about Amy and her little girl? What are you going to do about them?"

"'Ave another pint," responded Mr. Foggis promptly. "Guv'nor, hoy!"

"You don't want any more drink . . . you might get drunk."

"And why not," cried the soldier. "Ain't I got as much brilliant right to get drunk as what you 'ave? Don't mind if I do get drunk. I *wanter* get drunk. Straight, I do. I'll tell you why, young man, because you've acted gentlemanly. . . . I'm in love."

"With quite a miscellany," I suggested.

DIALOGUE WITH A SOLDIER

"Miss *What?*" said the soldier. "Miss Ellenor be jiggered! 'Er name is Maudie, and she——"

I hastened to supply a paraphrase. "You seem to be rather free with your affections—rather inconstant."

"What's that?" queried the soldier, who had again yielded to lethargy.

"Rather unfaithful," I repeated.

"Liar," cried the soldier. "I'm the true and constant sort, I am. The name I go by is 'Faithful Freddy.' They may say what they like about plumbers, but, begad, I am faithful."

"What's more," added Mr. Foggis drowsily, drawing his feet onto the bagatelle board, as he groped for an imaginary counterpane, and blew out the gas, "I can bring you six respectable females as'll swear to it."

II

Clara and Amy were washing crockery when I carried them a true and faithful account of my conversation with Amy's much-married soldier. Amy wept.

"Don't cry, little Birdie," pleaded Clara. "Ya *got* the man, now, ain't yer?"

"Got the man!" echoed Birdie.

"Suppose ya leave it to yar auntie? Yar auntie goes round to the barracks, 'as a little old-fashioned chat wiv Constant Freddie and there y'are! 'Assicks for two in Plympton church."

"You be plaguing me," whined Birdie. "There won't be no weddin' for me. I durs'n't marry 'im. I durs'n't do it."

"Why durs'n't ya?" demanded Clara.

"'Cos I durs'n't."

"My pretty, pretty Polly," Clara exclaimed, "we ain't asking ya to do a Echo Act. What we want is sense and argument. Tell us ya reasons. Tell us why ya durs'n't marry Freddy—Freddy, the faithful wonder."

"For one reason," answered Birdie, after thinking deeply, "he's a married man."

"Go on—*is* he?" responded Clara, with affected wonder. "I thought 'e was on'y learning 'ow to write out valentines."

"You be plaguing me," said Amy.

"According to what 'e told our innocent young lawyer yere," pursued Clara, "your Frederick is married good an' proper—back, front, and sideways. 'Is marriage lines would keep a lady's 'air in curl for a twelvemonth. That's just the beauty of it, my gal. A man what's married everybody, ain't nobody's 'usband. I tell ya, it's all right for you—if you *want* the man."

"But I got another reason," said Amy: "a proper reason. I didn't reckon for to tell you, on'y you do plague me so. The truth is. . . . The truth is I . . . I be married meself to—to a party—to—to somebody else."

Clara nearly dropped a butter-dish. "S-say it again!" she gasped.

"I be married meself," repeated the obedient Birdie. "I be married meself, to a party in Sussex: a *old* party."

Clara, seating herself heavily, buried her head and arms in leadless glaze and wept—for joy! "Gawd bless ya, Birdie!" gurgled Clara.

"I runned away from him," Birdie added.

Clara continued to gurgle.

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“ ’Tisn’t naarthun to mock at,” protested Birdie. “He were a sour-souled ugly-mannered old party. He druv me to it.”

Clara tried to look serious. “I’ll lay he was all that, Birdie. ‘Ya’ve got a sour soul,’ she says, ‘an’ be damned to ya!’ says she, and ’ops it with a swoddy! What was the trouble, Birdie?”

“He weer that ugly-mannered,” answered Birdie. “He weer that pernickety and fumbling and foolish. No sort of a ’usband for a hearty young woman. ’Tis a round-about affair, but the gist of it be like this a-here——”

“R!” ejaculated Clara. “Tell us the gist of it.”

III

“The gist of it be like this a-here. This old party—which his name were Hamnet Bunyard—I seed him first among the oats, as I go walking out along the twitten.”

“The which?” demanded Clara.

“The twitten. ’Tis a name we got at ’ome, in Sussex. That mean’s the same’s when anybody say ‘footpath.’ I see this Hamnet Bunyard walkin’ down the twitten, among the oats, close to my ’ome.

“I drops me leg to him, because this Hamnet Bunyard, though he don’t belong rightly to the gentry, he bean’t one of the commonality. He’ve got cottages of his own and five cows and a couple of tidy haystacks. He stand still when we be got close to each other and look down on me, soft like.

“ ‘Never tal’ me,’ he say, ‘as this be le’l Amy Birch?’

“ ‘That it be, then,’ says I, dropping me leg.

" 'You've a-growed wunnerful,' he says.

" 'So moi mother do tell me, sir,' says I, dropping me leg.

" 'Are ye got ere a bachelor?' says he, looking foolish.

"I 'aven't got no time for them games, and so I tal' him, being as 'ow I live at 'ome with my mother and eight of us in family.

" 'Can ye tie up a hop-shoot?' says 'e, comin' close and looking foolisher. 'Can ye pickle a pig?'

" 'Yes, if you please, sir.'

"He throwed up his eyes, the same as if he be going to pray.

" 'You got a good mother!' he say. 'A good mother is a great blessing: the nextest blessing to a suitable wife.'

"Then he come closer an' wagged 'is old beard agin moi 'at, and snuffled. 'Can ye pluck and drar a hen?' he say.

"I told him 'Yes,' becos we keep a run of chickun in our 'ome. He drops the beard an inch or two, and it flutter round moi ear, and he snuffles extraornerary, and that dedn't 'arf buzz me, his face being so close, for that's a turble musty old face, with sprags of hair all over it, and the beard all green and white, like duck-weed.

" 'Ow do ye fancy *me* for a bachelor?' he say.

"I couldn't help but laugh, and he laugh, too: one o' they there spattery laughs.

IV

"So 'e find a job o' work for moi oold father, what was pretty nigh past it, and 'e set out for to fool and

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flatter moi oold mother, giving 'er 'is shirt and sheet and collar to wash each Saturday.

"At last one day in April, he bring a present of some liver to moi mother, and she and he they haves a rare old crack together, alongside of the pig-pound, and presently mother she call to me and talk to me and she say I haves to marry him. I goos along of her into our le'l washhouse, and theer he sit on the copper, with his boots off, him having corns. He rises his hat to me, very polite.

" 'I brought you a bunch of onions for yer tea,' he says.

"I takes a-holt of the onions, and he takes a-holt of my hand.

" 'Girl,' he says. 'I be a-goin' to marry you, and I will tell you for a-why,' he say. 'Ever since moi poor *first* woman took an' choked out,' says he, 'I seemed fur to feel the want of a helpmeet. There's rub'b on moi land turning rotten for the want of female help. In times past I 'ave bin noted fur moi 'ome-made wines. There's cows due to calve this coming month, and nobody to see them through it, on'y me and a boy and your pore left-'anded father. There's a weddin' ring, a gold keeper, two sets of black, a 'air bracelet, and odds and ends waitin' at 'ome for a wearer. That seem to me as if there bean't in all this parish 'ere a young woman what deserve a good 'usband so well as what you do. I brought you the keeper for a token. We'll make a start with the banns on Whit Sunday, and we'll be married o' quarter day.' He spatter and he laugh and he show his gums.

V

"Well, the same as my mother tal' me, so I done, and we was married in chapel on the June rent-day.

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"When we git to Hamnet's home—that be a tidy bit of a place, with two decent cows, 'orses, and four or five fields behind it, what he rented off Squire Mann: they call it Stunt Farm—when we git to Stunt Farm then . . . there was I, left all alone in that big 'ouse, along o' Mr. Bunyard. Mr. Bunyard he take off his boots and sit down in the arm-chair and he call to me: 'I got a knee to spare,' he say. So I haves to set down upon his knee and light his oold pipe for him, and he show his gums and spatter, and his mawth-eaten old beard that didn't 'arf buzz me. That did so buzz me I couldn't look at 'im. I shut me eyes, and when I opened them, why—would you believe it?—old Mr. Bunyard had fell asleep!

"There he sit, with his nose cocked up, his pipe all askew on the edge of his face, and a noise like blue-bottles coming out of his mouth. Arter a bit, when I see as he be properly set, I slips off'n his knee and set down on the corn-box, and look at him.

I lay there, cringin' till the cramp git 'old o' me, and then I 'aves to move. I git up and goos on tip-toe to the le'l oold stairway, but the stairway that creaked so wunnerful, old Mr. Bunyard, he wake up. He rub his wet old eyes and he stare at me, the same as if he be dazed. Then a sneezin' fit take holt of him and that shake the dazement out of him.

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“ ‘Hi!’ he holler, so soon as that have spattered itself out, ‘Hi, Mrs. Bunyard, I want moi gruel!’ ”

“ ‘Yere what?’ says I.

“ ‘Moi gruel,’ he says. ‘Moi cup of ’ot gruel.’ ”

“ ‘What gruel?’ I say.

“ ‘Moi gruel,’ says Mr. Bunyard, ‘what I alus ’aves o’ night.’ ”

“ ‘Well—’ave it!’ I say.

“ ‘ ‘Ave it?’ says old Hamnet; ‘ ’ave it? ’Ow kin I ’ave it without you fetch it, same as moi pore old Kate had used to do? For nigh on thirty year I’ve had moi cup o’ gruel o’ nights, and now as I be a decent married man again I mean to see as I ’aves moi married rights. Fetch me moi gruel!’ ”

“ ‘There bean’t no water in the house,’ I tal’ him; ‘nor yet no meal nor firing.’ ”

“ ‘There’s water in the well,’ he say; ‘there’s meal in the barn, there’s wood in the shed. Make haste and fetch them. I want moi gruel!’ ”

“ ‘But ’tis dark,’ I say; ‘ ’tis cold. The place is all strange to me. Oi be fritted.’ ”

“ ‘Dark?’ he holler, mockin’ of me; ‘cold? Are I married to a goop or a gawk, then, to be fritted of a dark barn or a wet yard? Oh, that moi Kate could be yere. Moi Kate would show ye! Oi never wanted gruel so long as Kate live with me.’ ”

“ ‘He look up to the ceiling, and shake his silly old fist, and blobs o’ wet come treacling out of his eye, and his beard be all of a tremble.’ ”

“ ‘Fetch me moi gruel, you staring girl,’ he say. ‘I want moi gruel. Ah, dearr! Oi want moi gruel!’ ”

"Did you fetch 'im 'is titty-bottle, too?" demanded Clara.

"I fetched him naarthun else; on'y 'is gruel. As it begun, so it went on. Night after night, he'd stand and holler for 'is gruel. Night after night I pitied 'im. Then the dreams begun. I stood it all right up to then. But they dreams finished me."

"Was they ghost-dreams?" asked Clara.

"They was religious dreams. . . ." answered Amy.

Rigidly shorn of corpuscular adornment her narrative amounts to this:

The engaging Mr. Bunyard awoke one morning with an inspired and ecstatic visage. He informed his wife that he had been deemed worthy to hold speech with some of the most eminent persons in the Old Testament and had formed acquaintance with many celebrated ladies, all of whom had treated him with kindness and consideration.

Mrs. Bunyard accepted this information coldly. She was not jealous, she was critical. . . .

Mr. Bunyard continued to dream about Old Testament ladies. He narrated with great wealth of detail the particulars of a spiritual interview with Bathsheba.

"I tal' him," said Amy, "that he seem to be choosin' too fancy a lot for moi taste. I say to him, I say: 'Whoi can't you git acquainted with a sensible person like Martha? Whoi be you allus in the company of this a-here sort: this Bathsheba and Lot's wife and that there Judith girl and the Queen of Sheba, and so forth?' "

Mr. Bunyard pooh-poohed this utterance—and thenceforward his spiritual enterprises gained in audacity. He developed into a regular Man about Jerusalem. . . .

It was shortly after this that Amy decided to part from

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Mr. Bunyard. She was a woman of moderate instincts, and, well—I hardly like to chronicle such audacity, but—her husband’s impudence attained to such proportions that finally he dreamed himself into the country home of King Solomon, and there partook of tea with seven hundred and forty-eight of King Solomon’s helpmeets.

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So Amy “runned away.”

MRS. KORNER SINS HER MERCIES

By JEROME K. JEROME

“**I** DO mean it,” declared Mrs. Korner, “I like a man to be a man.”

“But you would not like Christopher—I mean Mr. Korner—to be that sort of man,” suggested her bosom friend.

“I don’t mean I should like it if he did it often. But I should like to feel he was able to be that sort of man—Have you told your master that breakfast is ready?” demanded Mrs. Korner of the domestic staff, entering at the moment with three boiled eggs and a teapot.

“Yus, I’ve told ’im,” replied the staff indignantly.

The domestic staff of Acacia Villa, Ravenscourt Park, lived in a state of indignation. It could be heard of mornings and evenings, saying its prayers indignantly.

“What did he say?”

“Said ’e’ll be down the moment ’e’s dressed.”

“Nobody wants him to come before,” commented Mrs. Korner. “Answered me that he was putting on his collar when I called up to him five minutes ago.”

“Answer yer the same thing now, if yer called up to ’im agen, I ’spect,” was the opinion of the staff. “Was on his ’ands and knees when I looked in scooping round under the bed for ’is collar-stud.”

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Mrs. Korner paused with the teapot in her hand. "Was he talking?"

"Talkin'? Nobody there to talk to; I 'edn't got no time to stop and chatter."

"I mean to himself," explained Mrs. Korner. "He—he wasn't swearing?" There was a note of eagerness, almost of hope, in Mrs. Korner's voice.

"Swearin'! 'E! Why, 'e don't know any."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Korner. "That will do, Harriet; you may go."

Mrs. Korner put down the teapot with a bang. "The very girl," said Mrs. Korner bitterly, "the very girl despises him."

"Perhaps," suggested Miss Greene, "he had been swearing and had finished."

But Mrs. Korner was not to be comforted. "Finished! Any other man would have been swearing all the time."

"Perhaps," suggested the kindly bosom friend, ever the one to plead the cause of the transgressor, "perhaps he was swearing, and she did not hear him. You see, if he had his head well underneath the bed——"

The door opened.

"Sorry I am late," said Mr. Korner, bursting cheerfully into the room. It was a point with Mr. Korner always to be cheerful in the morning. "Greet the day with a smile and it will leave you with a blessing," was the motto Mrs. Korner, this day a married woman of six months and three weeks' standing, had heard her husband murmur before getting out of bed on precisely two hundred and two occasions. The motto entered largely into the scheme of Mr. Korner's life. Written in fine copper-plate upon cards all of the same size, a choice selec-

tion counselled him each morning from the rim of his shaving-glass.

"Did you find it?" asked Mrs. Korner.

"It is most extraordinary," replied Mr. Korner, as he seated himself at the breakfast-table. "I saw it go under the bed with my own eyes. Perhaps——"

"Don't ask me to look for it," interrupted Mrs. Korner. "Crawling about on their hands and knees, knocking their heads against iron bedsteads, would be enough to make some people swear." The emphasis was on the "some."

"It is not bad training for the character," hinted Mr. Korner, "occasionally to force oneself to perform patiently tasks calculated——"

"If you get tied up in one of those long sentences of yours you will never get out in time to eat your breakfast," was the fear of Mrs. Korner.

"I should be sorry for anything to happen to it," remarked Mr. Korner, "its intrinsic value may perhaps——"

"I will look for it after breakfast," volunteered the amiable Miss Greene. "I am good at finding things."

"I can believe it," the gallant Mr. Korner assured her, as with the handle of his spoon he peeled his egg. "From such bright eyes as yours, few——"

"You've only got ten minutes," his wife reminded him. "Do get on with your breakfast."

"I should like," said Mr. Korner, "to finish a speech occasionally."

"You never would," asserted Mrs. Korner.

"I should like to try," sighed Mr. Korner, "one of these days——"

"How did you sleep, dear? I forgot to ask you," questioned Mrs. Korner of the bosom friend.

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"I am always restless in a strange bed the first night," explained Miss Greene. "I daresay, too, I was a little excited."

"I could have wished," said Mr. Korner, "it had been a better example of the delightful art of the dramatist. When one goes but seldom to the theatre——"

"One wants to enjoy oneself," interrupted Mrs. Korner.

"I really do not think," said the bosom friend, "that I have ever laughed so much in all my life."

"It was amusing. I laughed myself," admitted Mr. Korner. "At the same time I cannot help thinking that to treat drunkenness as a theme——"

"He wasn't drunk," argued Mrs. Korner, "he was just jovial."

"My dear!" Mr. Korner corrected her, "he simply couldn't stand."

"He was much more amusing than some people who can," retorted Mrs. Korner.

"It is possible, my dear Aimee," her husband pointed out to her, "for a man to be amusing without being drunk; also for a man to be drunk without——"

"Oh, a man is all the better," declared Mrs. Korner, "for letting himself go occasionally."

"My dear——"

"You, Christopher, would be all the better for letting yourself go——occasionally."

"I wish," said Mr. Korner, as he passed his empty cup, "you would not say things you do not mean. Any one hearing you——"

"If there's one thing makes me more angry than another," said Mrs. Korner, "it is being told I say things I do not mean."

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"Why say them then?" suggested Mr. Korner.

"I don't. I do—I mean I do mean them," explained Mrs. Korner.

"You can hardly mean, my dear," persisted her husband, "that you really think I should be all the better for getting drunk—even occasionally."

"I didn't say drunk; I said 'going it.'"

"But I do 'go it' in moderation," pleaded Mr. Korner.

"Moderation in all things," that is my motto."

"I know it," returned Mrs. Korner.

"A little of everything and nothing—" this time Mr. Korner interrupted himself. "I fear," said Mr. Korner, rising, "we must postpone the further discussion of this interesting topic. If you would not mind stepping out with me into the passage, dear, there are one or two little matters connected with the house——"

Host and hostess squeezed past the visitor and closed the door behind them. The visitor continued eating.

"I do mean it," repeated Mrs. Korner, for the third time, reseating herself a minute later at the table. "I would give anything—anything," reiterated the lady recklessly, "to see Chrstopher more like the ordinary sort of man."

"But he has always been the sort—the sort of man he is," her bosom friend reminded her.

"Oh, during the engagement, of course, one expects a man to be perfect. I didn't think he was going to keep it up."

"He seems to me," said Miss Greene, "a dear, good fellow. You are one of those people who never know when they are well off."

"I know he is a good fellow," agreed Mrs. Korner,

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"and I am very fond of him. It is just because I am fond of him that I hate feeling ashamed of him. I want him to be a manly man, to do the things that other men do."

"Do all the ordinary sort of men swear and get occasionally drunk?"

"Of course they do," asserted Mrs. Korner, in a tone of authority. "One does not want a man to be a milk-sop."

"Have you ever seen a drunken man?" inquired the bosom friend, who was nibbling sugar.

"Heaps," replied Mrs. Korner, who was sucking marmalade off her fingers.

By which Mrs. Korner meant that some half a dozen times in her life she had visited the play, choosing by preference the lighter forms of British drama. The first time she witnessed the real thing, which happened just precisely a month later, long after the conversation here recorded had been forgotten by the parties most concerned, no one could have been more utterly astonished than was Mrs. Korner.

How it came about Mr. Korner was never able fully to satisfy himself. Mr. Korner was not the type that serves the purpose of the temperance lecturer. His "first glass" he had drunk more years ago than he could recollect, and since had tasted the varied contents of many others. But never before had Mr. Korner exceeded, nor been tempted to exceed, the limits of his favourite virtue, moderation.

"We had one bottle of claret between us," Mr. Korner would often recall to his mind, "of which he drank the greater part. And then he brought out the little green

flask. He said it was made from pears—that in Peru they kept it specially for children's parties. Of course, that may have been his joke; but in any case I cannot see how just one glass—I wonder could I have taken more than one glass while he was talking." It was a point that worried Mr. Korner.

The "he" who had talked, possibly to such bad effect, was a distant cousin of Mr. Korner's, one Bill Damon, chief mate of the steamship *La Fortuna*. Until their chance meeting that afternoon in Leadenhall Street, they had not seen each other since they were boys together. The *Fortuna* was leaving St. Katherine's Docks early the next morning bound for South America, and it might be years before they met again. As Mr. Damon pointed out, Fate, by thus throwing them into each other's arms, clearly intended they should have a cosy dinner together that very evening in the captain's cabin of the *Fortuna*. Mr. Korner, returning to the office, despatched to Ravenscourt park an express letter, announcing the strange news that he might not be home that evening much before ten, and at half-past six, for the first time since his marriage, directed his steps away from home and Mrs. Korner.

The two friends talked of many things. And later on they spoke of sweethearts and of wives. Mate Damon's experiences had apparently been wide and varied. They talked—or, rather, the mate talked, and Mr. Korner listened—of the olive-tinted beauties of the Spanish Main, of the dark-eyed Passionate Creoles, of the blonde Junos of the Californian valleys. The mate had theories concerning the care and management of women; theories that, if the mate's word could be relied on, had stood the test of studied application. A new world opened out

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to Mr. Korner; a world where lovely women worshipped with doglike devotion men who, though loving them in return, knew how to be their masters. Mr. Korner, warming gradually from cold disapproval to bubbling appreciation, sat enthralled. Time alone set a limit to the recital of the mate's adventures. At eleven o'clock the cook reminded them that the captain and the pilot might be aboard at any moment. Mr. Korner, surprised at the lateness of the hour, took a long and tender farewell of his cousin, and found St. Katherine's Docks one of the most bewildering places out of which he had ever tried to escape. Under a lamp-post in the Minorities, it suddenly occurred to Mr. Korner that he was an unappreciated man. Mrs. Korner never said and did the sort of things by means of which the beauties of the Southern Main endeavoured feebly to express their consuming passion for gentlemen superior in no way—as far as he could see—to Mr. Korner himself. Thinking over the sort of things Mrs. Korner did say and did do, tears sprung into Mr. Korner's eyes. Noticing that a policeman was eyeing him with curiosity, he dashed them aside and hurried on. Pacing the platform of the Mansion House Station, where it was always draughty, the thought of his wrongs returned to him with renewed force. Why was there no trace of doglike devotion about Mrs. Korner? The fault—so he bitterly told himself—the fault was his. "A woman loves her master; it is her instinct," mused Mr. Korner to himself. "Damme," said Mr. Korner, "I don't believe that half her time she knows I am her master."

"Go away," said Mr. Korner to a youth of pasty appearance, who, with open mouth, had stopped immediately in front of him.

"I'm fond o' listening," explained the pasty youth.

"Who's talking?" demanded Mr. Korner.

"You are," replied the pasty youth.

It is a long journey from the city to Ravenscourt Park, but the task of planning out the future life of Mrs. Korner and himself kept Mr. Korner wide awake and interested. When he got out of the train the thing chiefly troubling him was the three-quarters of a mile of muddy road stretching between him and his determination to make things clear to Mrs. Korner then and there.

The sight of Acacia Villa, suggesting that everybody was in bed and asleep, served to further irritate him. A doglike wife would have been sitting up to see if there was anything he wanted. Mr. Korner, acting on the advice of his own brass plate, not only knocked but also rang. As the door did not immediately fly open, he continued to knock and ring. The window of the best bedroom on the first floor opened.

"Is that you?" said the voice of Mrs. Korner. There was, as it happened, distinct suggestion of passion in Mrs. Korner's voice, but not of the passion Mr. Korner was wishful to inspire. It made him a little more angry than he was before.

"Don't you talk to me with your head out of window as if this were a gallant show. You come down and open the door," commanded Mr. Korner.

"Haven't you got your latchkey?" demanded Mrs. Korner.

For answer Mr. Korner attacked the door again. The window closed. The next moment but six or seven, the door was opened with such suddenness that Mr. Korner still gripping the knocker, was borne inward in a flying

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attitude. Mrs. Korner had descended the stairs ready with a few remarks. She had not anticipated that Mr. Korner, usually slow of speech, could be even readier.

"Where's my supper?" indignantly demanded Mr. Korner, still supported by the knocker.

Mrs. Korner, too astonished for words, simply stared.

"Where's my supper?" repeated Mr. Korner, by this time worked up into genuine astonishment that it was not ready for him. "What's everybody mean, going off to bed, when the masterororous hasn't had his supper?"

"Is anything the matter, dear?" was heard the voice of Miss Greene, speaking from the neighbourhood of the first landing.

"Come in, Christopher," pleaded Mrs. Korner, "please come in, and let me shut the door."

Mrs. Korner was the type of young lady fond of domineering with a not ungraceful hauteur over those accustomed to yield readily to her; it is a type that is easily frightened.

"I wan' grilled kinneys-on-toast," explained Mr. Korner, exchanging the knocker for the hatstand, and wishing the next moment that he had not. "Don' let's 'avery talk about it. Unnerstan'? I dowan' any talk about it."

"What on earth am I to do?" whispered the terrified Mrs. Korner to her bosom friend. "There isn't a kidney in the house."

"I should poach him a couple of eggs," suggested the helpful bosom friend; "put plenty of Cayenne pepper on them. Very likely he won't remember."

Mr. Korner allowed himself to be persuaded into the dining-room, which was also the breakfast parlour and the library. The two ladies, joined by the hastily clad

staff, whose chronic indignation seemed to have vanished in face of the first excuse for it that Acacia Villa had afforded her, made haste to light the kitchen fire.

"I should never have believed it," whispered the white-faced Mrs. Korner, "never."

"Makes yer know there's a man about the 'ouse, don't it?" chirped the delighted staff. Mrs. Korner, for answer, boxed the girl's ears; it relieved her feelings to a slight extent.

The staff retained its equanimity, but the operations of Mrs. Korner and her bosom friend were retarded rather than assisted by the voice of Mr. Korner, heard every quarter of a minute, roaring out fresh directions.

"I dare not go in alone," said Mrs. Korner, when all things were in order on the tray. So the bosom friend followed her, and the staff brought up the rear.

"What's this?" frowned Mr. Korner. "I told you chops."

"I'm so sorry, dear," faltered Mrs. Korner, "but there weren't any in the house."

"In a perfectly organizehouse, such as for the future I meanterave," continued Mr. Korner, helping himself to beer, "there should always be chopanteak. Unnerstanme? chopanteak?"

"I'll try and remember, dear," said Mrs. Korner.

"Pearstome," said Mr. Korner, between mouthfuls, "you're norrer sort of housekeeper I want."

"I'll try to be, dear," pleaded Mrs. Korner.

"Where's your books?" Mr. Korner suddenly demanded.

"My books?" repeated Mrs. Korner, in astonishment.

Mr. Korner struck the corner of the table with his fist,

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which made most things in the room, including Mrs. Korner, jump.

"Don't you defy me, my girl," said Mr. Korner. "You know whatermean, your housekeepin' books."

They happened to be in the drawer of the chiffonier. Mrs. Korner produced them, and passed them to her husband with a trembling hand. Mr. Korner, opening one by hazard, bent over it with knitted brows.

"Pearsterme, my girl, you can't add," said Mr. Korner.

"I—I was always considered rather good at arithmetic, as a girl," stammered Mrs. Korner.

"What you mayabeen as a girl, and what—twenner-seven and nine?" fiercely questioned Mr. Korner.

"Thirty-eight-seven," commenced to blunder the terrified Mrs. Korner.

"Know your nine tables or don't you?" thundered Mr. Korner.

"I used to," sobbed Mrs. Korner.

"Say it," commanded Mr. Korner.

"Nine times one are nine," sobbed the poor little woman, "nine times two——"

"Goron," said Mr. Korner sternly.

She went on steadily, in a low monotone, broken by stifled sobs. The dreary rhythm of the repetition may possibly have assisted. As she mentioned fearfully that nine times eleven were ninety-nine, Miss Greene pointed stealthily towards the table. Mrs. Korner, glancing up fearfully, saw that the eyes of her lord and master were closed; heard the rising snore that issued from his head, resting between the empty beer-jug and the cruet stand.

"He will be all right," counselled Miss Greene. "You go to bed and lock yourself in. Harriet and I will see to

his breakfast in the morning. It will be just as well for you to be out of the way."

And Mrs. Korner, only too thankful for some one to tell her what to do, obeyed in all things.

Toward seven o'clock the sunlight streaming into the room caused Mr. Korner first to blink, then yawn, then open half an eye.

"Greet the day with a smile," murmured Mr. Korner, sleepily, "and it will——"

Mr. Korner sat up suddenly and looked about him. This was not bed. The fragments of a jug and glass lay scattered round his feet. To the tablecloth an overturned cruet stand mingled with egg gave colour. A tingling sensation about his head called for investigation. Mr. Korner was forced to the conclusion that somebody had been trying to make a salad of him—somebody with an exceptionally heavy hand for mustard. A sound directed Mr. Korner's attention to the door.

The face of Miss Greene, portentously grave, was peeping through the jar.

Mr. Korner rose. Miss Greene entered stealthily, and, closing the door, stood with her back against it.

"I suppose you know what—what you've done?" suggested Miss Greene.

She spoke in a sepulchral tone; it chilled poor Mr. Korner to the bone.

"It is beginning to come back to me, but not—not very clearly," admitted Mr. Korner.

"You came home drunk—very drunk," Miss Greene informed him, "at two o'clock in the morning. The noise you made must have awakened half the street."

A groan escaped from his parched lips.

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"You insisted upon Aimee cooking you a hot supper."

"I insisted!" Mr. Korner glanced down upon the table. "And—and she did it?"

"You were very violent," explained Miss Greene; "we were terrified at you, all three of us." Regarding the pathetic object in front of her, Miss Greene found it difficult to recollect that a few hours before she really had been frightened of it. Sense of duty alone restrained her present inclination to laugh.

"While you sat there, eating your supper," continued Miss Greene remorselessly, "you made her bring you her books."

Mr. Korner had passed the stage when anything could astonish him.

"You lectured her about her housekeeping." There was a twinkle in the eye of Mrs. Korner's bosom friend. But lightning could have flashed before Mr. Korner's eyes without his noticing it, just then.

"You told her that she could not add, and you made her say her tables."

"I made her—" Mr. Korner spoke in the emotionless tones of one merely desiring information. "I made Aimee say her tables?"

"Her nine times," nodded Miss Greene.

Mr. Korner sat down upon his chair and stared with stony eyes into the future.

"What's to be done?" said Mr. Korner, "she'll never forgive me. I know her. You are not chaffing me?" he cried with a momentary gleam of hope. "I really did it?"

"You sat in that very chair where you are sitting now and ate poached eggs, while she stood opposite to you and said her nine times table. At the end of it, seeing you had

gone to sleep yourself, I persuaded her to go to bed. It was three o'clock, and we thought you would not mind." Miss Greene drew up a chair, and, with her elbows on the table, looked across at Mr. Korner. Decidedly there was a twinkle in the eyes of Mrs. Korner's bosom friend.

"You'll never do it again," suggested Miss Greene.

"Do you think it possible," cried Mr. Korner, "that she may forgive me?"

"No, I don't," replied Miss Greene. At which Mr. Korner's face fell back to zero. "I think the best way out will be for you to forgive her."

The idea did not even amuse him. Miss Greene glanced round to satisfy herself that the door was still closed, and listened a moment to assure herself of the silence.

"Don't you remember," Miss Greene took the extra precaution to whisper it, "the talk we had at breakfast time the first morning of my visit, when Aimee said you would be all the better for 'going it,' occasionally?"

Yes, slowly it came back to Mr. Korner. But she only said "going it," Mr. Korner recollected to his dismay.

"Well, you've been 'going it,' " persisted Miss Greene. "Besides, she did not mean 'going it.' She meant the real thing, only she did not like to say the word. We talked about it after you had gone. She said she would give anything to see you more like the ordinary man. And that is her idea of the ordinary man."

Mr. Korner's sluggishness of comprehension irritated Miss Greene. She leaned across the table and shook him. "Don't you understand? You have done it on purpose to teach her a lesson. It is she who has got to ask you to forgive her."

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"You think——?"

"I think, if you manage it properly, it will be the best day's work you have ever done. Get out of the house before she wakes. I shall say nothing to her. Indeed, I shall not have the time; I must catch the ten o'clock from Paddington. When you come home this evening, you talk first; that's what you've got to do." And Mr. Korner, in his excitement, kissed the bosom friend before he knew what he had done.

Mrs. Korner sat waiting for her husband that evening in the drawing-room. She was dressed as for a journey, and about the corners of her mouth were lines familiar to Christopher, the sight of which sent his heart into his boots. Fortunately, he recovered himself in time to greet her with a smile. It was not the smile he had been rehearsing all day, but that it was a smile of any sort astonished the words away from Mrs. Korner's lips, and gave him the inestimable advantage of first speech.

"Well," said Mr. Korner cheerily, "and how did you like it?"

For the moment Mrs. Korner feared her husband's new complaint had already reached the chronic stage, but his still smiling face reassured her—to that extent at all events.

"When would you like me to 'go it' again? Oh, come," continued Mr. Korner in response to his wife's bewilderment, "surely you have not forgotten the talk we had at breakfast-time—the first morning of Mildred's visit. You hinted how much more attractive I should be for occasionally 'letting myself go!'"

Mr. Korner, watching intently, perceived that upon Mrs. Korner recollection was slowly forcing itself.

"I was unable to oblige you before," explained Mr. Korner, "having to keep my head clear for business, and not knowing what the effect upon me might be. Yesterday I did my best, and I hope you are pleased with me. Though, if you could see your way to being content—just for the present and until I get more used to it—with a similar performance not oftener than once a fortnight, say, I should be grateful," added Mr. Korner.

"You mean—" said Mrs. Korner, rising.

"I mean, my dear," said Mr. Korner, "that almost from the day of our marriage you have made it clear that you regard me as a milksop. You have got your notion of men from silly books and sillier plays, and your trouble is that I am not like them. Well, I've shown you, that, if you insist upon it I can be like them."

"But you weren't," argued Mrs. Korner, "not a bit like them."

"I did my best," repeated Mr. Korner; "we are not all made alike. That was *my* drunk."

"I didn't say 'drunk.'"

"But you meant it," interrupted Mr. Korner. "We were talking about drunken men. The man in the play was drunk. You thought him amusing."

"He was amusing," persisted Mrs. Korner, now in tears. "I meant that sort of drunk."

"His wife," Mr. Korner reminded her, "didn't find him amusing. In the third act she was threatening to return home to her mother, which, if I may judge from finding you here with all your clothes on, is also the idea that has occurred to you."

"But you—you were so awful," whimpered Mrs. Korner.

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"What did I do?" questioned Mr. Korner.

"You came hammering at the door——"

"Yes, yes, I remember that. I wanted my supper, and you poached me a couple of eggs. What happened after that?"

The recollection of that crowning indignity lent to her voice the true note of tragedy.

"You made me say my tables—my nine times!"

Mr. Korner looked at Mrs. Korner, and Mrs. Korner looked at Mr. Korner and for a little while there was silence.

"Were you—were you really a little bit on," faltered Mrs. Korner, "or only pretending?"

"Really," confessed Mr. Korner. "For the first time in my life. If you are content for the last time also."

"I am sorry," said Mrs. Korner, "I have been very silly. Please forgive me."

THE HOAX

By CUTHBERT BEDE

ONE morning, Mr. Verdant Green and Mr. Bouncer were lounging in the gateway of Brazenface when the latter's attention was riveted by the appearance on the other side of the street, of a modest-looking young gentleman, who appeared to be so ill at ease in his frock-coat and "stick-up" collars, as to lead to the strong presumption that he wore those articles of manly dress for the first time.

"I'll bet you a bottle of blacking, Gig-lamps," said little Mr. Bouncer, "that this respected party is an intending freshman. Look at his customary suits of solemn black as Othello, or Hamlet, or some other swell says in Shakespeare. And, besides his black go-to-meeting bags, please to observe," continued the little gentleman, in the tone of a waxwork showman; "please to hobserve the pecooliar-ity hof the hair-chain, likewise the straps of the period. Look! he's coming this way. Gig-lamps, I vote we take a rise out of the youth. Hem! Good-morning! Can we have the pleasure of assisting you in anything?"

"Yes, sir! thank you, sir," replied the youthful stranger, flushing like a girl to the roots of his curly, auburn hair; "perhaps, sir, you can direct me to Brazenface College, sir?"

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"Well, sir! it's not at all improbable, sir, but what I could, sir," replied Mr. Bouncer; "but, perhaps, sir, you'll first favour me with your name, and your business there, sir."

"Certainly, sir!" rejoined the stranger; and, while he fumbled at his card-case, the experienced Mr. Bouncer whispered to our hero, "Told you he was a suckling freshman, Gig-lamps! He has got a bran new card-case, and says 'sir' at the sight of the academics." The card handed to Mr. Bouncer bore the name of "MR. JAMES PUCKER"; and in smaller characters in the corner of the card were the words, "*Brazenface College, Oxford.*"

"I came, sir," said the blushing Mr. Pucker, "to enter for my matriculation examination, and I wished to see the gentleman who will have to examine me, sir."

"The doose you do!" said Mr. Bouncer sternly; "then, young man, allow me to say that you've regularly been and gone and done it, and put your foot in it most completely."

"How-ow-ow—how, sir?" stammered the dupe.

"How?" replied Mr. Bouncer, still more sternly; "do you mean to brazen out your offence by asking how? What *could* have induced you, sir, to have had printed on this card the name of this college, when you've not a prospect of belonging to it—it may be for years, it may be for never, as the bard says. You've committed a most grievous offence against the University statutes, young gentleman; and as this gentleman here—Mr. Pluckem, the junior examiner—will tell you!" and with that Mr. Bouncer nudged Mr. Verdant Green, who took his cue with astonishing aptitude, and glared through his glasses at the trembling Mr. Pucker, who stood blushing

and bowing, and heartily repenting that his schoolboy vanity had led him to invest four-and-sixpence in "100 cards, and plate, engraved with name and address."

"Put the cards in your pocket, sir, and don't let me see them again!" said the junior examiner, quite rejoiced at the opportunity afforded him of proving to his friend that *he* was no longer a freshman.

"He forgives you for the sake of your family, young man!" said Mr. Bouncer with pathos; "you've come to the right shop, for *this* is Brazenface; and you've come just at the right time, for here is the gentleman who will assist Mr. Pluckem in examining you"; and Mr. Bouncer pointed to Mr. Four-in-hand Fosbrooke, who was coming up the street on his way from the Schools, where he was making a very laudable (but, as it proved, futile) endeavour "to get through his smalls," or, in other words, to pass his Little-go examination. The hoax which had been suggested to the ingenious mind of Mr. Bouncer was based upon the fact of Mr. Fosbrooke's being properly got-up for his sacrifice in a white tie, and a pair of very small bands—the two articles which, with the usual academics, form the costume demanded by Alma Mater of all her children when they take their places in her Schools. And, as Mr. Fosbrooke was far too politic a gentleman to irritate the Examiners by appearing in a "loud" or sporting costume, he had carried out the idea of clerical character suggested by the bands and choker, by a quiet, gentlemanly suit of black, which, he had fondly hoped, would have softened his Examiners' manners, and not permitted them to be brutal.

Mr. Four-in-hand Fosbrooke, therefore, to the unsophisticated eye of the blushing Mr. Pucker, presented a

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very fine specimen of the Examining Tutor; and this impression on Mr. Pucker's mind was heightened by Mr. Fosbrooke, after a few minutes' private conversation with the two other gentlemen, turning to him and saying, "It will be extremely inconvenient to me to examine you now; but as you probably wish to return home as soon as possible, I will endeavour to conclude the business at once—this gentleman, Mr. Pluckem," pointing to our hero, "having kindly promised to assist me. Mr. Bouncer, will you have the goodness to follow with the young gentleman to my rooms?"

Leaving Mr. Pucker to express his thanks for the great kindness, and Mr. Bouncer to plunge him into the depths of trepidation by telling him terrible *stories* of the Examiners' fondness for rejecting the candidates for examination, Mr. Fosbrooke and our hero ascended to the rooms of the former, where they hastily cleared away cigar-boxes and pipes, turned certain French pictures with their faces to the wall, and covered over with an outspread *Times* a regiment of porter and spirit bottles which had just been smuggled in, and were drawn up rank and file on the sofa. Having made this preparation, and furnished the table with pens, ink, and scribbling-paper, Mr. Bouncer and the victim were admitted.

"Take a seat, sir," said Mr. Fosbrooke gravely; and Mr. Pucker put his hat on the ground, and sat down at the table in a state of blushing nervousness. "Have you been at a public school?"

"Yes, sir," stammered the victim; "a very public one, sir; it was a boarding-school, sir; I was a day-boy, sir, and in the first class."

"First class of an uncommon slow train!" muttered Mr. Bouncer.

"And are you going back to the boarding-school?" asked Mr. Verdant Green, with the air of an assistant judge.

"No, sir," replied Mr. Pucker, "I have just done with it; quite done with school, sir, this last half; and papa is going to put me to read with a clergyman until it is time for me to come to college."

"Refreshing innocence!" murmured Mr. Bouncer; while Mr. Fosbrooke and our hero conferred together, and hastily wrote on two sheets of the scribbling paper.

"Now, sir," said Mr. Fosbrooke to the victim, after a paper had been completed, "let us see what your Latin writing is like. Have the goodness to turn what I have written into Latin; and be very careful, sir," added Mr. Fosbrooke sternly, "be very careful that it is Cicero's Latin, sir!" and he handed Mr. Pucker a sheet of paper, on which he had scribbled the following:

"TO BE TRANSLATED INTO PROSE-Y LATIN, IN THE MANNER OF CICERO'S ORATIONS AFTER DINNER."

"If, therefore, any on your bench, my luds, or in this assembly, should entertain an opinion that the proximate parts of a mellifluous mind are forever conjoined and unconnected, I submit to you, my luds, that it will of necessity follow, that such clandestine conduct being a mere nothing—or, in the noble language of our philosophers, bosh—every individual act of overt misunderstanding will bring interminable limits to the empiricism of thought, and will redound in the very lowest degree to the credit of the malefactor."

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“TO BE TURNED INTO LATIN, AFTER THE MANNER OF THE ANIMALS OF TACITUS.”

“She went into the garden to cut a cabbage to make an apple-pie. Just then a great she-bear coming down the street, poked its nose into the shop-window. ‘What! no soap?’ So he died, and she (very imprudently) married the barber. And there were present at the wedding the Joblillies, and the Piccannies, and the gobelites, and the great Panjandrum himself, with the little button on top. So they all set to playing Catch-who-catch-can, till the gunpowder ran out of the heels of their boots.”

It was well for the purpose of the hoaxers that Mr. Pucker’s trepidation prevented him from making a calm perusal of the paper; and he was nervously doing his best to turn the nonsensical English word by word into equally nonsensical Latin, when his limited powers of Latin writing were brought to a full stop by the untranslatable word “bosh.” As he could make nothing of this, he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and gazed appealingly at the benignant features of Mr. Verdant Green. The appealing gaze was answered by our hero ordering Mr. Pucker to hand in his paper for examination, and to endeavour to answer the questions which he and his brother examiner had been writing down for him.

Mr. Pucker took the two papers of questions, and read as follows:

HISTORY

1. Draw a historical parallel (after the manner of Plutarch) between Hannibal and Annie Laurie.

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2. What internal evidence does the *Odyssey* afford, that Homer sold his Trojan war-ballads at three yards an obolus?
3. In what way were the shades on the banks of the Styx supplied with spirits?
4. Give a brief account of the Roman Emperors who visited the United States, and state what they did there.
5. Show from the words, "*Hoc erat in votis*" (*Sat. vi., Lib. ii*) that Horace's favourite wine was hock, and that he meant to say "he always voted for hock."
6. Draw a parallel between the Children in the Wood and Achilles in the Styx.
7. Name the *prima donnas* who have appeared in the operas of Virgil and Horace since the "*Virgilio Opera*" and "*Horatio Opera*" were composed.

EUCLID, ARITHMETIC, and ALGEBRA

1. "The extremities of a line are points." Prove this by the rule of railways.
2. Show the fallacy of defining an angle, as "a worm at one end and a fool at the other."
3. If one side of a triangle be produced, what is there to prevent the other two sides from also being brought forward?
4. If the gnomon of a sun-dial be divided into two equal, and also into two unequal parts, what would be its value?
5. If seven horses eat twenty-five acres of grass in three

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days, what would be their condition on the fourth day? Prove by practice.

6. Reduce two academical years to their lowest terms.

Mr. Pucker did not know what to make of such extraordinary and unexpected questions. He blushed, attempted to write, fingered his curls, tried to collect his faculties, and then appeared to give himself over to despair; whereupon little Mr. Bouncer was seized with an immoderate fit of coughing which had well-nigh brought the farce to its *dénouement*.

"I'm afraid, young gentleman," said Mr. Four-in-hand Fosbrooke, as he carelessly settled his white tie and bands, "I am afraid, Mr. Pucker, that your learning is not yet up to the Brazenface standard. We are particularly cautious about admitting any gentleman whose acquirements are not of the highest order. But we will be as lenient to you as we are able, and give you one more chance to retrieve yourself. We will try a little *viva voce*, Mr. Pucker. Perhaps, sir, you will favour me with your opinions on the Fourth Punic War, and will also give me a slight sketch of the constitution of ancient Heliopolis."

Mr. Pucker waxed, if possible, redder and hotter than before, he gasped like a fish out of water; but all was to no purpose: he was unable to frame an answer to Mr. Fosbrooke's questions.

"Ah, sir," continued his tormentor, "I see that you will not do for us yet awhile, and I am therefore under the painful necessity of rejecting you. I should advise you, sir, to read hard for another twelve months, and endeavour to master those subjects in which you have

now failed. For a young man, Mr. Pucker, who knows nothing about the Fourth Punic War, and the constitution of ancient Heliopolis, is quite unfit to be enrolled among the members of such a learned college as Brazen-face. Mr. Pluckem quite coincides with me in this decision." (Here Mr. Verdant Green gave a Burleigh nod.) "We feel very sorry for you, Mr. Pucker, and also for your unfortunate family; but we recommend you to add to your present stock of knowledge, and to keep those visiting-cards for another twelvemonth." And Mr. Fosbrooke and our hero—disregarding poor Mr. Pucker's entreaties that they would consider his pa and ma, and would please to matriculate him this once, and he would work very hard, indeed he would—turned to Mr. Bouncer and gave some private instructions, which caused that gentleman to go and seek out Mr. Robert Filcher.

Five minutes after, that excellent scout met the dejected Mr. Pucker as he was crossing the quad on his way from Mr. Fosbrooke's rooms.

"Beg your pardon, sir," said Mr. Filcher, touching his forehead—for as Mr. Filcher, after the manner of his tribe, never was seen in a head-covering, he was unable to raise his hat or cap—"beg your pardon, sir! but was you a-lookin' for the party as examines the young gents for their matrickylation?"

"Eh?—no! I have just come from him," replied Mr. Pucker dolefully.

"Beg your pardon, sir," remarked Mr. Filcher, "but his rooms ain't that way at all. Mr. Slowcoach, as is the party you *ought* to have seed, has *his* rooms quite in a hopposite direction, sir; and he's the honly party as examines the matrickylatin' gents."

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"But I *have* been examined," observed Mr. Pucker, with the air of a plucked man; "and I am sorry to say that I was rejected, and——"

"I dessay, sir," interrupted Mr. Filcher; "but I think it's a 'oax, sir!"

"A what?" stammered Mr. Pucker.

"A 'oax—a sell!" replied the scout confidentially. "You see, sir, I think some of the gents have been makin' a little game of you, sir; they often does with fresh parties like you, sir. I dessay they've been makin' believe to examine you, sir. They don't mean no harm, sir; it's only their play, bless you!"

"Then," said Mr. Pucker, whose face had been clearing with every word the scout spoke; "then I'm not really rejected, but have still a chance of passing my examination?"

"Precisely so, sir," replied Mr. Filcher, "and—hexcuse me, sir—but if you would let me advise you, sir, you wouldn't go for to mention anythin' about the 'oax to Mr. Slowcoach. If you like to go to him now, sir, I'll show you the way."

In twenty minutes after this Mr. Pucker issued from the examining tutor's rooms with a joyful countenance, and again encountered the scout.

"Hope you have done the job this time, sir," said the scout.

"Yes," replied the radiant Mr. Pucker; "I shall be able to come to college this time next year."

"Werry glad of it, indeed, sir!" said Mr. Filcher with an eye to future perquisites; "and I suppose you didn't say a word about the 'oax?"

"Not a word!"

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"Then, sir, hexcuse me, but you're a trump, sir! And Mr. Fosbrooke's compliments to you, sir, and he'll be 'appy if you'll come up into his rooms, and take a glass of wine after the fatigues of the examination."

Need it be stated that, after this undergraduate display of hoaxing, Mr. Verdant Green would feel offended were he still to be called "an Oxford Freshman"?

THE QUARREL

By C. A. DAWSON-SCOTT

LIFE would be empty-like if we didn't have no squabbles, but I do think James Derrick went a bit far.

After all, Nicholas was his brother. What's more he had been born within half an hour of him.

That may have been the root of the trouble, for though they twinses were as different to look at as Esau and Jacob they must have been alike underneath.

Leastways they always wanted the same things.

Richard Derrick, their father, farmed Tresalyn, and seeing the boys were always at it hammer and tongs he set James up as a butcher and left Nick the farm. He'd meant, poor old chap, to bring peace, but he only sowed contention; for though James had a good business—you'll see his cart lined with clean linen and hung with joints, going up around most days—he had wanted to be a farmer, and more particularly to farm Tresalyn.

Nor that wasn't all, for the twins went courting the same little maid, and Mary Bennett took her time figuring out whether she would rather live in the village and see everything that was going on, or be up to Tresalyn with handsome Nick. After dilly-dallying a bit—and I can't blame her, for after the char-a-bangs took to coming through, there was some life in the street—she married

Nick, and from that day the brothers passed on the road without speaking.

Nicholas had got Tresalyn and he had got Mary, and there's no doubt James felt he'd been badly done by; but a grudge is a cold bedfellow and in time James couldn't but see that Mary's young sister Bessie was growed away to a fine woman. He hitched up with she and in time she brought him the finest family for miles around. The man was kept so busy providing for them that we all thought he'd have to forgive Nick his good fortune.

He were a dark stuggy chap, the sort that thinks instead of talking. He wanted to show Mary she'd made a mistake. He fair lived for that, screwing here and pinching there, but you can't put by when you've six hungry boys looking to you and near as many maidens.

Children are a Godsend to a farmer, but a butcher's business don't need a mighty lot of help, and James got a bit harassed, for it seemed as if he'd only to hang his trousers over the bedrail for there to be a new noise in the cradle.

I do truly think he'd have give up brooding over his wrongs if it hadn't a-been for John Bennett's will.

If it hadn't been a mild winter Mrs. Bennett would never have took the crazy notion to wash her neck before 'twas over. Her husband warned her, but Sally was a wilful sort of woman. Natural consequence she caught cold and it turned to ammonia and she died.

There wasn't no bier at St. Ryn those days, so she had a walking funeral and of course the two sons-in-law was invited.

The old man wasn't well enough to foot it, so they had to lead the procession. James was paired with Mary and

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Bessie with Nick and when they got back James was put a-one-side of his father-in-law to carve the chickens, while Nicholas sat on the other and did his best with the ham. You'd have thought they might have spoken across, and I make no doubt Nick was willing but not James.

"I hope, father," says he to old John, "that you'll come and stay along o' we. Got a quiverful but we're doing grand and there'll be a warm place for you."

"Thankee, m'son. I'll like fine to come, but first I'm going to abide for a two-three months with Mary up to Tresalyn."

There was nothing James would say to that for 'twas only right the old man should pay his first visit to Mary, she being the eldest.

"I'll be expecting of yer then, in a month or two." He turned to his wife. "You mind that, Bessie. Your Da'll be coming to us in May."

Which was a good arrangement, only things never fall out as you'd expect.

Old John enjoyed hisself more that spring than he'd done in years—a first-rate time he had. To begin with there was the funeral. The Bennetts were highly respected and everybody went—all the neighbours. Then there was the sale and people came to that from miles around. Better than Summercourt Fair it was, and they say it put more'n two hundred pounds in his pocket. After it was over the old man went up to Tresalyn, where there wasn't no noisy quiverful but only two meek-as-mice little maidens, and where Mary made him as comfortable as if he'd been her sweetheart instead of her father.

But John Bennett was pretty old, too old to be

enjoying life. Mary was some cook but she couldn't keep the breath in him, and before May he, too, was carried up the hill and put in under.

"They didn't look after old feller proper," James say. "Reason why—they didn't want him to come here."

Bessie knowed that was nonsense. "Anyway," she told'n, "Da'll have left us the half of his money and you'll be able to buy the motor tilt-cart you've sat yer heart on."

When the will came to be read, however, 'twas found John Bennett had forgot he'd more'n one daughter, for only Mary was mentioned. Old feller'd left her all he had.

James took it hard. He had had to let Nicholas have Mary and the farm, but he wouldn't stand for this. Who were the witnesses?

Ben Tippitt and 'Siah Jonas worked up to Tresalyn, and it appeared that the day before John Bennett died they'd been called in to witness his will. 'Twas all fair and square.

Anyway James couldn't do nothing.

We knew Nick was fond of money but there's nothing in that. We could all do with a bit more'n we got.

"Looky here," says James to the men. "I s'pose you saw what was wrote on the paper . . . saw what you signed to."

Ben Tippitt said he had, but 'Siah Jonas allowed that the candle wasn't extry bright and he was took up with thinking of the old man on the bed.

We did all feel James had been hardly done by. The man went home and thought it over. 'Twould have been easy to get the names wrote on blank paper with the true

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will laid a-top. The candlelight and the dying man and witnesses who hadn't much eddication—well, say what you will, it looked as if there had been some hanky-panky.

No doubt there'd been a good fire in the room, and wills, after all, is only paper. Leastways that's what James thought, and, after all, he was Nick's brother and knew him better than any one else.

Opposite butcher's, there's an old mill that belongs to Tresalyn and which Nick used as a store. Day after the will was read he found he wanted a bag of seed and he came down to fetch it.

He kept bobbing up against people on the road and it struck him they were sort of grinning. They looked at him as if he'd left his clothes to home, and this puzzled him. Leastways it did until he reached the mill.

Pasted on the door was a bit of white paper that had been tore out of a child's exercise book.

It had printing on it, hand done, but good black on white, and it read:

"I, Nicholas Derrick, wrote John Bennett's will after he was dead so as to do James Derrick out of his share of the money."

Nor that wasn't all, for when he got back home he found that a notice with they daunting words had been stuck to the post of his yard gate. I tell you, the man was a bit hurried up.

James must have had a lot of time on his hands for wherever you went there was they notices. Everybody was reading of 'em and laughing, and though Nick tore down every one he could see he couldn't away with them

all. In the end he went up to the Vicarage and asked Mr. Adams what he could do to stop the nuisance.

Owing to the difference between him and James, the one of them went to chapel and t'other to church, though they was both belonging to a church family. Parson knew that, and he couldn't abear to lose a good man like James with a family that wanted a lot of church help in the matter of christenings and burying. You might say the quarrel was pounds out of Parson's pocket.

Nicholas found him writing a sermon on "Brotherly Love!" and no doubt Parson would have taken the matter up with James—for he liked having a finger in people's pies—if he hadn't had his own opinion about the will.

"I'm loath to suggest that a man should go to law," said he, "but you ought to have the matter cleared up. These placards are a—defamation of character."

That wasn't what Nick wanted. "Have the law of him? 'Twould cost a mint of money. I had thought, sir, you might tell him how wrong he is acting."

Parson was a bit stiff. "This trouble wouldn't have arisen, Derrick, if you had been more careful in your choice of witnesses."

Nick explained that old man had been took bad all of a sudden and they had been in a hurry, and with that Parson goes a bit red in the gills and says plump and plain that 'twasn't a fair will.

Nicholas Derrick was a smooth chap. I never knowed him get angry. "We had the charge of him, sir," said he, "and not a penny piece to show for it. Seem to me only right us should get what he left."

Very reasonable he wur, but Parson wasn't to be

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moved. "You can take it to a court of law or—you can live it down."

And Nicholas allowed that living it down would be the cheaper way. After all they placards didn't tell us nothing we didn't know before, and though James went on printing them and pasting of 'em on doors and walls, the best joke gets stale when you've heard it a two-three times.

One spring, when the black wind was blowing and everybody was having a touch of the 'flue,' James got it bad, and doctor wasn't able to give his wife no encouragement. She was never one to waste time, and when Farmer Prin, who was lay-preacher up to Wesley, called in to hearten poor chap for his journey, he found Bessie in the kitchen, ironing of his shroud and James lying alone overstairs.

"Derrick," said he after a bit of a solemn talk, "you can't repeat the Lord's Prayer."

"Yes, can. I can do it backwards and forwards."

"You can't say 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us!'"

James was took aback. "I dunno that I honestly can."

"Then how do yer expect to be let into heaven? You'd better forgive the chap."

James could see that if he were sent to hell on his brother's account Nick would have got the better of him again, and though he were terrible set against forgiving of him, there was nothing to be done. So Nicholas was fetched and all the village watched him walk into the house—a thing he'd never done before'n his life.

Mr. Prin said a few good words and the men shook hands.

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"I've always felt kindly towards you," said Nick.

"Ay, you've had the best of it. I'm only sorry I shan't live to pay you back for all your nastiness and mean ways."

"Come, come," cries Prin, "mustn't say them things. Better fit you think 'pon yer dying."

But James wasn't to be hushed up. "If brothers can't speak the truth to one another, I should like to know who can?"

"Anyway," said Nick, "we be at peace now, and seeing you got to go and I be still hale and hearty, I can't bear yer no grudge."

That night James, ready though unwilling to depart, took a turn for the better. In a week he was downstairs and Bessie was laying the shroud away with sprigs of lavender, and the neighbours was saying 'twas a miracle.

Now 'tis a fact that we forgive easiest when church-yard mould covers the other man. James saw he might outlive Nick. If he did 'twould be Nick would have to own he'd done wrong and ask forgiveness. 'Twas a grand encouraging thought that. Either James would get the better of Nick at long last or Nick would have to go down below.

As soon as he could hold a pen, James wrote to his brother:

"Don't take no notice of what we done o' Saturday. As I baint going to die, us'll carry on as before."

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By SAKI (H. H. MUNRO)

IT was a chill, rain-washed afternoon of a late August day, that indefinite season when partridges are still in security or cold storage, and there is nothing to hunt—unless one is bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, in which case one may lawfully gallop after fat red stags. Lady Blemley's house-party was not bounded on the north by the Bristol Channel, hence there was a full gathering of her guests round the tea-table on this particular afternoon. And, in spite of the blankness of the season and the triteness of the occasion, there was no trace in the company of that fatigued restlessness which means a dread of the pianola and a subdued hankering for auction bridge. The undisguised open-mouthed attention of the entire party was fixed on the homely negative personality of Mr. Cornelius Appin. Of all her guests, he was the one who had come to Lady Blemley with the vaguest reputation. Some one had said he was "clever," and he had got his invitation in the moderate expectation, on the part of his hostess, that some portion at least of his cleverness would be contributed to the general entertainment. Until tea-time that day she had been unable to discover in what direction, if any, his cleverness lay. He was neither a wit nor a

croquet champion, a hypnotic force nor a begetter of amateur theatricals. Neither did his exterior suggest the sort of man in whom women are willing to pardon a generous measure of mental deficiency. He had subsided into mere Mr. Appin, and the Cornelius seemed a piece of transparent baptismal bluff. And now he was claiming to have launched on the world a discovery beside which the invention of gunpowder, of the printing-press, and of steam locomotion were inconsiderable trifles. Science had made bewildering strides in many directions during recent decades, but this thing seemed to belong to the domain of miracle rather than to scientific achievement.

"And do you really ask us to believe," Sir Wilfrid was saying, "that you have discovered a means for instructing animals in the art of human speech, and that dear old Tobermory has proved your first successful pupil?"

"It is a problem at which I have worked for the last seventeen years," said Mr. Appin, "but only during the last eight or nine months have I been rewarded with glimmerings of success. Of course I have experimented with thousands of animals, but latterly only with cats, those wonderful creatures which have assimilated themselves so marvellously with our civilization while retaining all their highly developed feral instincts. Here and there among cats one comes across an outstanding superior intellect, just as one does among the ruck of human beings, and when I made the acquaintance of Tobermory a week ago I saw at once that I was in contact with a 'Beyond-cat' of extraordinary intelligence.

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I had gone far along the road to success in recent experiments; with Tobermory, as you call him, I have reached the goal."

Mr. Appin concluded his remarkable statement in a voice which he strove to divest of a triumphant inflection. No one said "rats," though Clovis's lips moved in a monosyllabic contortion which probably invoked those rodents of disbelief.

"And do you mean to say," asked Miss Resker, after a slight pause, "that you have taught Tobermory to say and understand easy words of one syllable?"

"My dear Miss Resker," said the wonder-worker patiently, "one teaches little children and savages and backward adults in that piece-meal fashion; when one has once solved the problem of making a beginning with an animal of highly developed intelligence one has no need for those halting methods. Tobermory can speak our language with perfect correctness."

This time Clovis very distinctly said, "Beyond-rats!" Sir Wilfrid was more polite, but equally sceptical.

"Hadn't we better have the cat in and judge for ourselves?" suggested Lady Blemley.

Sir Wilfrid went in search of the animal, and the company settled themselves down to the languid expectation of witnessing some more or less adroit drawing-room ventriloquism.

In a minute Sir Wilfrid was back in the room, his face white beneath its tan and his eyes dilated with excitement.

"By Gad, it's true!"

His agitation was unmistakably genuine, and his hearers started forward in a thrill of awakened interest.

Collapsing into an armchair he continued breathlessly: "I found him dozing in the smoking-room, and called out to him to come for his tea. He blinked at me in his usual way, and I said, 'Come on, Toby; don't keep us waiting'; and, by Gad! he drawled out in a most horribly natural voice that he'd come when he dashed well pleased! I nearly jumped out of my skin!"

Appin had preached to absolutely incredulous hearers; but Sir Wilfred's statement carried instant conviction. A Babel-like chorus of startled exclamation arose, amid which the scientist sat mutely enjoying the first fruit of his stupendous discovery.

In the midst of the clamour Tobermory entered the room and made his way with velvet tread and studied unconcern across to the group seated round the tea-table.

A sudden hush of awkwardness and constraint fell on the company. Somehow there seemed an element of embarrassment in addressing on equal terms a domestic cat of acknowledged mental ability.

"Will you have some milk, Tobermory?" asked Lady Blemley in a rather strained voice.

"I don't mind if I do," was the response, couched in a tone of even indifference. A shiver of suppressed excitement went through the listeners, and Lady Blemley might be excused for pouring out the saucerful of milk rather unsteadily.

"I'm afraid I've split a good deal of it," she said apologetically.

"After all, it's not my Axminster," was Tobermory's rejoinder.

Another silence fell on the group, and then Miss Resker, in her best district-visitor manner, asked if the

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human language had been difficult to learn. Tobermory looked squarely at her for a moment and then fixed his gaze serenely on the middle distance. It was obvious that boring questions lay outside his scheme of life.

"What do you think of human intelligence?" asked Mavis Pellington lamely.

"Of whose intelligence in particular?" asked Tobermory coldly.

"Oh, well, mine, for instance," said Mavis, with a feeble laugh.

"You put me in an embarrassing position," said Tobermory, whose tone and attitude certainly did not suggest a shred of embarrassment. "When your inclusion in this house-party was suggested Sir Wilfrid protested that you were the most brainless woman of his acquaintance, and that there was a wide distinction between hospitality and the care of the feeble-minded. Lady Blemley replied that your lack of brain-power was the precise quality which had earned you your invitation, as you were the only person she could think of who might be idiotic enough to buy their old car. You know, the one they call 'The Envy of Sisyphus,' because it goes quite nicely up-hill if you push it."

Lady Blemley's protestations would have had greater effect if she had not casually suggested to Mavis only that morning that the car in question would be just the thing for her down at her Devonshire home.

Major Barfield plunged in heavily to effect a diversion.

"How about your carryings-on with the tortoise-shell puss up at the stables, eh?"

The moment he had said it every one realised the blunder.

"One does not usually discuss these matters in public," said Tobermory frigidly. "From a slight observation of your ways since you've been in this house I should imagine you'd find it inconvenient if I were to shift the conversation on to your own little affairs."

The panic that ensued was not confined to the Major.

"Would you like to go and see if cook has got your dinner ready?" suggested Lady Blemley hurriedly, affecting to ignore the fact that it wanted at least two hours to Tobermory's dinner-time.

"Thanks," said Tobermory, "not quite so soon after my tea. I don't want to die of indigestion."

"Cats have nine lives, you know," said Sir Wilfrid heartily.

"Possibly," answered Tobermory; "but only one liver."

"Adelaide!" said Mrs. Cornett, "do you mean to encourage that cat to go out and gossip about us in the servants' hall?"

The panic had indeed become general. A narrow ornamental balustrade ran in front of most of the bedroom windows at the Towers, and it was recalled with dismay that this had formed a favourite promenade for Tobermory at all hours, whence he could watch the pigeons—and heaven knew what else besides. If he intended to become reminiscent in his present outspoken strain the effect would be something more than disconcerting. Mrs. Cornett, who spent much time at her toilet table, and whose complexion was reputed to be of a nomadic though punctual disposition, looked as ill at ease as the Major. Miss Scrawen, who wrote fiercely sensuous poetry and led a blameless life, merely displayed irrita-

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tion; if you are methodical and virtuous in private you don't necessarily want every one to know it. Bertie van Tahn, who was so depraved at seventeen that he had long ago given up trying to be any worse, turned a dull shade of gardenia white, but he did not commit the error of dashing out of the room like Odo Finsbury, a young gentleman who was understood to be reading for the Church and who was possibly disturbed at the thought of scandals he might hear concerning other people. Clovis had the presence of mind to maintain a composed exterior; privately he was calculating how long it would take to procure a box of fancy mice through the agency of the Exchange and Mart as a species of hush-money.

Even in a delicate situation like the present, Agnes Resker could not endure to remain too long in the background.

"Why did I ever come down here?" she asked dramatically.

"Judging by what you said to Mrs. Cornett on the croquet-lawn yesterday, you were out for food. You described the Blemleys as the dullest people to stay with that you knew, but said they were clever enough to employ a first-rate cook; otherwise they'd find it difficult to get any one to come down a second time."

"There's not a word of truth in it! I appeal to Mrs. Cornett," exclaimed the discomfited Agnes.

"Mrs. Cornett repeated your remark afterwards to Bertie van Tahn," continued Tobermory, "and said, 'That woman is a regular Hunger Marcher; she'd go anywhere for four square meals a day,' and Bertie van Tahn said——"

At this point the chronicle mercifully ceased. Tobermory had caught a glimpse of the big yellow Tom from the Rectory working his way through the shrubbery towards the stable wing. In a flash he had vanished through the open French window.

With the disappearance of his too brilliant pupil Cornelius Appin found himself beset by a hurricane of bitter upbraiding, anxious inquiry, and frightened entreaty. The responsibility for the situation lay with him, and he must prevent matters from becoming worse. Could Tobermory impart his dangerous gift to other cats? was the first question he had to answer. It was possible, he replied, that he might have initiated his intimate friend the stable puss into his new accomplishment, but it was unlikely that his teaching could have taken a wider range as yet.

"Then," said Mrs. Cornett, "Tobermory may be a valuable cat and a great pet; but I'm sure you'll agree, Adelaide, that both he and the stable cat must be done away with without delay."

"You don't suppose I've enjoyed the last quarter of an hour, do you?" said Lady Blemley bitterly. "My husband and I are very fond of Tobermory—at least, we were before this horrible accomplishment was infused into him; but now, of course, the only thing is to have him destroyed as soon as possible."

"We can put some strychnine into the scraps he always gets at dinner-time," said Sir Wilfrid, "and I will go and drown the stable cat myself. The coachman will be very sore at losing his pet, but I'll say a very catching form of mange has broken out in both cats and we're afraid of its spreading to the kennels."

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"But my great discovery!" expostulated Mr. Appin; "after all my years of research and experiment——"

"You can go and experiment on the shorthorns at the farm, who are under proper control," said Mrs. Cornett, "or the elephants at the Zoo. They're said to be highly intelligent, and they have this recommendation, that they don't come creeping about our bedrooms and under chairs and so forth."

An archangel ecstatically proclaiming the Millennium, and then finding that it clashed unpardonably with Henley and would have to be indefinitely postponed, could hardly have felt more crestfallen than Cornelius Appin at the reception of his wonderful achievement. Public opinion, however, was against him—in fact, had the general voice been consulted on the subject it is probable that a strong minority vote would have been in favour of including him in the strychnine diet.

Defective train arrangements and a nervous desire to see matters brought to a finish prevented an immediate dispersal of the party, but dinner that evening was not a social success. Sir Wilfrid had had rather a trying time with the stable cat and subsequently with the coachman. Agnes Resker ostentatiously limited her repast to a morsel of dry toast, which she bit as though it were a personal enemy; while Mavis Pellington maintained a vindictive silence throughout the meal. Lady Blemley kept up a flow of what she hoped was conversation, but her attention was fixed on the doorway. A plateful of carefully dosed fish scraps was in readiness on the sideboard, but sweets and savoury and dessert went their way, and no Tobermory appeared either in the dining-room or kitchen.

The sepulchral dinner was cheerful compared with the subsequent vigil in the smoking-room. Eating and drinking had at least supplied a distraction and cloak to the prevailing embarrassment. Bridge was out of the question in the general tension of nerves and tempers, and after Odo Finsbury had given a lugubrious rendering of "Melisande in the Wood" to a frigid audience, music was tacitly avoided. At eleven the servants went to bed, announcing that the small window in the pantry had been left open as usual for Tobermory's private use. The guests read steadily through the current batch of magazines, and fell back gradually on the "Badminton Library" and bound volumes of Punch. Lady Blemley made periodic visits to the pantry, returning each time with an expression of listless depression which forestalled questioning.

At two o'clock Clovis broke the dominating silence.

"He won't turn up to-night. He's probably in the local newspaper office at the present moment, dictating the first instalment of his reminiscences. Lady What's-her-name's book won't be in it. It will be the event of the day."

Having made this contribution to the general cheerfulness, Clovis went to bed. At long intervals the various members of the house-party followed his example.

The servants taking round the early tea made a uniform announcement in reply to a uniform question. Tobermory had not returned.

Breakfast was, if anything, a more unpleasant function than dinner had been, but before its conclusion the situation was relieved. Tobermory's corpse was brought in from the shrubbery, where a gardener had just dis-

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covered it. From the bites on his throat and the yellow fur which coated his claws it was evident that he had fallen in unequal combat with the big Tom from the Rectory.

By midday most of the guests had quitted the Towers, and after lunch Lady Blemley had sufficiently recovered her spirits to write an extremely nasty letter to the Rectory about the loss of her valuable pet.

Tobermory had been Appin's one success and he was destined to have no successor. A few weeks later an elephant in the Dresden Zoo, which had shown no previous sign of irritability, broke loose and killed an Englishman who had apparently been teasing it. The victim's name was variously reported in the papers as Oppin and Eppelin, but his front name was faithfully rendered Cornelius.

"If he was trying German irregular verbs on the poor beast," said Clovis, "he deserved all he got."

THE BALL AT THE MANSION HOUSE

By GEORGE and WEEDON GROSSMITH

April 30.

Perfectly astounded at receiving an invitation for Carrie and myself from the Lord and Lady Mayoress to the Mansion House, to "meet the Representatives of Trades and Commerce." My heart beat like a school-boy's. Carrie and I read the invitation over two or three times. I could scarcely eat my breakfast. I said—and I felt it from the bottom of my heart,—“Carrie, darling, I was a proud man when I led you down the aisle of the church on our wedding-day; that pride will be equalled, if not surpassed, when I lead my dear, pretty wife up to the Lord and Lady Mayoress at the Mansion House.” I saw the tears in Carrie's eyes, and she said: “Charlie, dear, it is *I* who have to be proud of you. And I am very, very proud of you. You have called me pretty; and as long as I am pretty in your eyes, I am happy. You, dear old Charlie, are *not* handsome, but you are *good*, which is far more noble.” I gave her a kiss, and she said: “I wonder if there will be any dancing? I have not danced with you for years.”

I cannot tell what induced me to do it, but I seized her round the waist, and we were silly enough to be exe-

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cutting a wild kind of polka when Sarah entered, grinning, and said: "There is a man, mum, at the door who wants to know if you want any good coals." Most annoyed at this. Spent the evening in answering and tearing up again, the reply to the Mansion House, having left word with Sarah if Gowing or Cummings called we were not at home. Must consult Mr. Perkupp how to answer the Lord Mayor's invitation.

May 1.

Carrie said: "I should like to send mother the invitation to look at." I consented, as soon as I had answered it. I told Mr. Perkupp at the office, with a feeling of pride, that we had received an invitation to the Mansion House; and he said, to my astonishment, that he himself gave in my name to the Lord Mayor's secretary. I felt this rather discounted the value of the invitation, but I thanked him; and in reply to me, he described how I was to answer it. I felt the reply was too simple; but of course Mr. Perkupp knows best.

May 3.

Sent my dress-coat and trousers to the little tailor's round the corner, to have the creases taken out. Told Gowing not to call next Monday, as we were going to the Mansion House. Sent similar note to Cummings.

May 3.

Carrie went to Mrs. James, at Sutton, to consult about her dress for next Monday. While speaking incidentally to Spotch, one of our head clerks, about the Mansion

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House, he said: "Oh, I'm asked, but don't think I shall go." When a vulgar man like Spotch is asked, I feel my invitation is considerably discounted. In the evening, while I was out, the little tailor brought round my coat and trousers, and because Sarah had not a shilling to pay for the pressing, he took them away again.

May 4.

Carrie's mother returned the Lord Mayor's invitation, which was sent to her to look at, with apologies for having upset a glass of port over it. I was too angry to say anything.

May 5.

Bought a pair of lavender kid-gloves for next Monday, and two white ties, in case one got spoiled in the tying.

May 6, Sunday.

A very dull sermon, during which, I regret to say, I twice thought of the Mansion House reception to-morrow.

May 7.

A big red-letter day; viz., the Lord Mayor's reception. The whole house upset. I had to get dressed at half-past six, as Carrie wanted the room to herself. Mrs. James had come up from Sutton to help Carrie; so I could not help thinking it unreasonable that she should require the entire attention of Sarah, the servant, as well. Sarah kept running out of the house to fetch "something for missis," and several times, I had, in my full evening-dress, to answer the back-door.

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The last time it was the greengrocer's boy, who, not seeing it was me, for Sarah had not lighted the gas, pushed into my hands two cabbages and half-a-dozen coal-blocks. I indignantly threw them on the ground, and felt so annoyed that I so far forgot myself as to box the boy's ears. He went away crying, and said he should summons me, a thing I would not have happen for the world. In the dark, I stepped on a piece of the cabbage, which brought me down on the flags all of a heap. For a moment I was stunned, but when I recovered I crawled upstairs into the drawing-room, and on looking into the chimney-glass discovered that my chin was bleeding, my shirt smeared with the coal-blocks, and my left trouser torn at the knee.

However, Mrs. James brought me down another shirt, which I changed in the drawing-room. I put a piece of court-plaster on my chin, and Sarah very neatly sewed up the tear at the knee. At nine o'clock Carrie swept into the room, looking like a queen. Never have I seen her look so lovely or so distinguished. She was wearing a satin dress of sky-blue—my favourite colour—and a piece of lace, which Mrs. James lent her, round the shoulders, to give a finish. I thought perhaps the dress was a little too long behind, and decidedly too short in front, but Mrs. James said it was *à la mode*. Mrs. James was most kind, and lent Carrie a fan of ivory with red feathers, the value of which, she said, was priceless, as the feathers belonged to the Kachu eagle—a bird now extinct. I preferred the little white fan which Carrie bought for three-and-six at Shoolbred's, but both ladies sat on me at once.

We arrived at the Mansion House too early, which

was rather fortunate, for I had an opportunity of speaking to his lordship, who graciously condescended to talk with me some minutes; but I must say I was disappointed to find he did not even know Mr. Perkupp, our principal.

I felt as if we had been invited to the Mansion House by one who did not know the Lord Mayor himself. Crowds arrived, and I shall never forget the grand sight. My humble pen can never describe it. I was a little annoyed with Carrie, who kept saying: "Isn't it a pity we don't know anybody?"

Once she quite lost her head. I saw some one who looked like Franching, from Peckham, and was moving towards him when she seized me by the coat-tails, and said, quite loudly: "Don't leave me," which caused an elderly gentleman, in a court suit, and a chain round him, and two ladies, to burst out laughing. There was an immense crowd in the supper-room, and, my stars! it was a splendid supper—any amount of champagne.

Carrie made a most hearty supper, for which I was pleased; for I sometimes think she is not strong. There was scarcely a dish she did not taste. I was so thirsty, I could not eat much. Receiving a sharp slap on the shoulder, I turned, and, to my amazement, saw Farmer-son, our ironmonger. He said, in the most familiar way: "This is better than Brickfield Terrace, eh?"

I simply looked at him, and said coolly: "I never expected to see you here." He said, with a loud, coarse laugh: "I like that—if *you*, why not *me*?" I replied: "Certainly." I wish I could have thought of something better to say. He said: "Can I get your good lady anything?" Carrie said: "No, I thank you," for which I

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was pleased. I said, by way of reproof to him: "You never sent to-day to paint the bath, as I requested." Farmerson said: "Pardon me, Mr. Pooter, no shop when we're in company, please."

Before I could think of a reply, one of the sheriffs, in full court costume, slapped Farmerson on the back and hailed him as an old friend, and asked him to dine with him at his lodge. I was astonished. For fully five minutes they stood roaring with laughter, and digging each other in the ribs. They kept telling each other they didn't look a day older. They began embracing each other and drinking champagne.

To think that a man who mends our scraper should know any member of our aristocracy! I was just moving off with Carrie, when Farmerson seized me rather roughly by the collar, and, addressing the Sheriff, said: "Let me introduce my neighbour, Pooter." He did not even say "Mister." The Sheriff handed me a glass of champagne. I felt, after all, it was a great honour to drink a glass of wine with him, and I told him so. We stood chatting for some time, and at last I said: "You must excuse me now if I join Mrs. Pooter." When I approached her, she said: "Don't let me take you away from friends. I am quite happy standing here alone in a crowd, knowing nobody."

As it takes two to make a quarrel, and as it was neither the time nor the place for it, I gave my arm to Carrie, and said: "I hope my darling little wife will dance with me, if only for the sake of saying we had danced at the Mansion House, as guests of the Lord Mayor." Finding the dancing after supper was less formal, and knowing how much Carrie used to admire my dancing

in the days gone by, I put my arm round her waist and we commenced a waltz.

A most unfortunate accident occurred. I had got on a new pair of boots. Foolishly, I had omitted to take Carrie's advice; namely, to scratch the soles of them with the points of the scissors or to put a little wet on them. I had scarcely started when, like lightning, my left foot slipped away and I came down, the side of my head striking the floor with such violence that for a second or two I did not know what had happened. I need hardly say that Carrie fell with me with equal violence, breaking the comb on her hair and grazing her elbow.

There was a roar of laughter, which was immediately checked when people found that we had really hurt ourselves. A gentleman assisted Carrie to a seat, and I expressed myself pretty strongly on the danger of having a plain polished floor with no carpet or drugget to prevent people slipping. The gentleman, who said his name was Darwitts, insisted on escorting Carrie to have a glass of wine, an invitation which I was pleased to allow Carrie to accept.

I followed, and met Farmerson, who immediately said, in his loud voice, "Oh, are you the one who went down?"

I answered with an indignant look.

With execrable taste, he said: "Look here, old man, we are too old for this game. We must leave these capers to the youngsters. Come and have another glass, that is more in our line."

Although I felt I was buying his silence by accepting, we followed the others into the supper-room.

Neither Carrie nor I, after our unfortunate mishap,

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felt inclined to stay longer. As we were departing, Farmerson said: "Are you going? If so you might give me a lift."

I thought it better to consent, but wish I had first consulted Carrie.

May 8.

I woke up with a most terrible headache. I could scarcely see, and the back of my neck was as if I had given it a crick. I thought first of sending for a doctor; but I did not think it necessary. When up, I felt faint, and went to Brownish's, the chemist, who gave me a draught. So bad at the office, had to 'get leave to come home. Went to another chemist in the City, and I got a draught. Brownish's dose seems to have made me worse; have eaten nothing all day. To make matters worse, Carrie, every time I spoke to her, answered me sharply—that is, when she answered at all.

In the evening I felt very much worse again and said to her: "I do believe I've been poisoned by the lobster mayonnaise at the Mansion House last night"; she simply replied, without taking her eyes from her sewing: "Champagne never did agree with you." I felt irritated and said: "What nonsense you talk; I only had a glass and a half, and you know as well as I do—" Before I could complete the sentence she bounced out of the room. I sat over an hour waiting for her to return; but as she did not, I determined I would go to bed. I discovered Carrie had gone to bed without even saying "good-night!" leaving me to bar the scullery door and feed the cat. I shall certainly speak to her about this in the morning.

May 9.

Still a little shaky with black specks. The *Blackfriars Bi-Weekly News* contains a long list of the guests at the Mansion House ball. Disappointed to find our names omitted, though Farmerson's is in plainly enough with M.L.L. after it, whatever that may mean. More than vexed because we had ordered a dozen copies to send to our friends. Wrote to the *Blackfriars Bi-Weekly News* pointing out their omission.

Carrie had commenced her breakfast when I entered the parlour. I helped myself to a cup of tea, and I said, perfectly calmly and quietly: "Carrie, I wish a little explanation of your conduct last night."

She replied, "Indeed! and I desire something more than a *little* explanation of your conduct the night before."

I said coolly: "Really, I don't understand you."

Carrie said sneeringly: "Probably not; you were scarcely in a condition to understand anything."

I was astounded at this insinuation and simply ejaculated: "Caroline!"

She said: "Don't be theatrical, it has no effect on me. Reserve that tone for your new friend, *Mister Farmerson*, the ironmonger."

I was about to speak, when Carrie, in a temper such as I have never seen her in before, told me to hold my tongue. She said: "Now *I'm* going to say something! After professing to snub Mr. Farmerson, you permit him to snub *you*, in my presence, and then accept his invitation to take a glass of champagne with you, and you don't limit yourself to one glass. You then offer this vulgar man, who made a bungle of repairing our scraper,

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a seat in our cab on the way home. I say nothing about his tearing my dress in getting in the cab, nor of treading on Mrs. James's expensive fan, which you knocked out of my hand, and for which he never even apologised; but you smoked all the way home without having the decency to ask my permission. That is not all! At the end of the journey, although he did not offer you a far-thing towards his share of the cab, you asked him in. Fortunately, he was sober enough to detect, from my manner, that his company was not desirable."

Goodness knows I felt humiliated enough at this; but, to make matters worse, Gowing entered the room, without knocking, with two hats on his head and holding the garden-rake in his hand, with Carrie's fur tippet (which he had taken off the downstairs hall-peg) round his neck, and announced himself in a loud, coarse voice: "His Royal Highness, the Lord Mayor!" He marched twice round the room like a buffoon, and, finding we took no notice, said: "Hulloh! what's up? Lovers' quarrel, eh?"

There was silence for a moment, so I said quietly: "My dear Gowing, I'm not very well, and not quite in the humour for joking; especially when you enter the room without knocking, an act which I fail to see the fun of."

Gowing said: "I'm very sorry, but I have called for my stick, which I thought you would have sent round."

May 12.

Got a single copy of the *Blackfriars Bi-Weekly News*. There was a short list of several names they had omitted; but the stupid people had mentioned our names as "Mr. and Mrs. C. Porter." Most annoying! Wrote again and

I took particular care to write our names in capital letters, POOTER, so that there should be no possible mistake this time.

May 16.

Absolutely disgusted on opening the *Blackfriars Bi-Weekly News* of to-day, to find the following paragraph: "We have received two letters from Mr. and Mrs. Charles Pewter, requesting us to announce the important fact that they were at the Mansion House Ball." I tore up the paper and threw it in the waste-paper basket. My time is far too valuable to bother about such trifles.

THE SHOOTING OF SHINROE

By E. Æ. SOMERVILLE and MARTIN ROSS

MR. JOSEPH FRANCIS McCABE rose stiffly from his basket chair, picked up the cushion on which he had been seated, looked at it with animosity, hit it hard with his fist, and, flinging it into the chair, replaced himself upon it, with the single word: "Flog!"

I was aware that he referred to the flock with which the cushions in the lounge of Reardon's Hotel were stuffed.

"They have this hotel destroyed altogether with their improvements," went on Mr. McCabe, between puffs, as he lit his pipe. "God be with the time this was the old smoking-room, before they knocked it and the hall into one and spoilt the two of them! There were fine solid chairs in it that time, that you'd sleep in as good as your bed, but as for these wicker affairs, I declare the wind'd whistle through them the same as a crow's nest." He paused and brought his heel down heavily on the top of the fire. "And look at that for a grate! A Well-grate they call it—I'd say, 'Leave Well alone!' Thirty years I'm coming to Sessions here, and putting up in this house,

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and in place of old Tim telling me me own room was ready for me, there's a whipper-snapper of a snapdragon in a glass box in the hall, asking me me name in broken English" (it may be mentioned that this happened before the War), "and 'Had a Cook's ticket?' and down-facing me that I must leave my key in what he called the 'Bew-ro!' "

I said I knew of a lady who always took a Cook's ticket when she went abroad, because when she got to Paris there would be an Englishman on the platform to meet her, or at all events a broken Englishman.

Mr. McCabe softened to a temporary smile, but held on to his grievance with the tenacity of his profession. (I don't think I have mentioned that he is a Solicitor, of a type now, unfortunately, becoming obsolete.) He had a long grey face, and a short grey moustache; he dyed his hair, and his age was known to no man.

"There was one of Cook's tourists sat next me at breakfast," he resumed, "and he asked me was I ever in Ireland before, and how long was I in it. 'Wan day,' says I!"

"Did he believe you?" I asked.

"He did," replied Mr. McCabe, with something that approached compassion.

I have always found old McCabe a mitigating circumstance of Sessions at Owenford, both in Court and out of it. He was a sportsman of the ingrained variety that grows wild in Ireland, and in any of the horse-coping cases that occasionally refresh the innermost soul of Munster, it would be safe to assume that Mr. McCabe's special gifts had ensured his being retained, generally on the shady side. He fished when occasion served, he

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shot whether it did or not. He did not exactly keep horses, but he always knew some one who was prepared to "pass on" a thoroughly useful animal, with some infirmity so insignificant that until you tried to dispose of him you did not realise that he was yours, until his final passing-on to the next world. He had certain shooting privileges in the mountains behind the town of Owenford (bestowed, as he said, by a grateful client), and it had often been suggested by him that he and I should anticipate some November Sessions by a day, and spend it "on the hill." We were now in the act of carrying out the project.

"Ah, these English," McCabe began again, mixing himself a glass of whisky and water, "they'd believe anything so long as it wasn't the truth. Talking politics these lads were, and by the time they had their ham and eggs swallowed they had the whole country arranged. 'And look,' says they—they were anglers, God help us!—'look at all the money that's going to waste for want of preserving the rivers!' 'I beg your pardon,' says I, 'there's water-bailiffs on the most of the rivers. I was defending a man not long since, that was cot by the water-bailiff poaching salmon on the Owen. "And what proof have you?" says I to the water-bailiff. "How do you know it was a salmon at all?" "Is it how would I know?" says the bailiff, "didn't I gaff the fish for him meself!"' "

"What did you anglers say to that?" I enquired.

"Well, they didn't quite go so far as to tell me I was a liar," said Mr. McCabe tranquilly. "Ah, telling such as them the truth is wasting what isn't plenty! Then they'll meet some fellow that lies like a tooth-drawer, and they'll write to the *English Times* on the head of

him!" He stretched forth a long and bony hand for the tumbler of whisky and water. "And talking of tooth-drawers," he went on, "there a dentist comes here once a fortnight, Jeffers his name is, and a great sportsman, too. I was with him to-day—" he passed his hand consciously over his mouth, and the difference that I had dimly felt in his appearance suddenly, and in all senses of the word, flashed upon me—"and he was telling me how one time, in the summer that's past, he'd been out all night fishing in the Owen. He was going home before the dawn, and he jumped down off a bank on to what he took to be a white stone—and he aimed for the stone, mind you, because he thought the ground was wet—and what was it but a man's face!" McCabe paused to receive my comment. "What did he do, is it? Ran off for his life, roaring out 'There's a first-rate dentist in Owenford!' The fellow was lying asleep there, and he having bundles of spurge with him to poison the river! He had drink taken, I suppose."

"Was he a water-bailiff, too?" said I. "I hope the conservators of the river stood him a set of teeth."

"If they did," said McCabe, with an unexpected burst of feeling, "I pity him!" He rose to his feet, and put his tumbler down on the chimney-piece. "Well, we should get away early in the morning, and it's no harm for me to go to bed."

He yawned—a large yawn that ended abruptly with a metallic click. His eyes met mine, full of unspoken things; we parted in a silence that seemed to have been artificially imposed upon McCabe.

The wind boomed intermittently in my chimney during the night and a far and heavy growling told of the

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dissatisfaction of the sea. Yet the morning was not unfavourable. There was a broken mist, with shimmers of sun in it, and the carman said it would be a thing of nothing and would go out with the tide. The Boots, a relic of the old *régime*, was pessimistic, and mentioned that there were two stars squeez up agin the moon last night, and he would have no dependence on the day. McCabe offered no opinion, being occupied in bestowing in a species of dog-box beneath the well of the car a young Irish setter, kindly lent by his friend the dentist. The setter, who had formed at sight an unfavourable opinion of the dog-box, had resolved himself into an invertebrate mass of jelly and lead, and was with difficulty straightened out and rammed home into it.

"Have we all now?" said McCabe, slamming the door in the dog's face. "Take care we're not like me uncle, old Tom Duffy, that was going shooting, and was the whole morning slapping his pockets and saying, 'Me powder! me shot! me caps! me wads!' and when he got to the bog. 'O tare an 'ouns!' says he, 'I forgot the gun.' "

There are still moments when I can find some special and not-otherwise-to-be-attained flavour in driving on an outside car; a sense of personal achievement in sitting, by some method of instinctive suction, the lurches and swoops, peculiar to these vehicles. Reardon's had given us its roomiest car and its best horse, a yellow mare, with a long back and slinging trot, and a mouth of iron.

"Where did Mr. Reardon get the mare, Jerry?" asked McCabe, as we zigzagged in successive hairbreadths through the streets of Owenford.

"D-Dublin, sir," replied the driver, who, with both fists extended in front of him and both heels planted

against his narrow footboard, seemed to find utterance difficult.

"She's a goer!" said McCabe.

"She is—she killed two men," said Jerry, in two jerks.

"That's a great credit to her. What way did she do it?"

"P-pulled the lungs out o' them!" ejaculated Jerry, turning the last corner and giving the mare a shade more of her head, as a tribute, perhaps, to her prowess.

She swung us for some six miles along the ruts of the coast road at the same unflinching pace, after which turning inland and uphill, we began the climb of four miles in to the mountains. It was about eleven o'clock when we pulled up beside a long and reedy pool, high up in the heather; the road went on, illimitably it seemed, and was lost with its attendant telegraph posts, in cloud.

"Away with ye now, Jerry," said McCabe; "we'll shoot our way home."

He opened the back of the dog-box, and summoned its occupant. The summons was disregarded. Far back in the box two sparks of light and a dead silence indicated the presence of the dog.

"How snug you are in there!" said McCabe; "here, Jerry, pull him out for us. What the deuce is this his name is? Jeffers told me yesterday and it's gone from me."

"I d'no would he bite me?" said Jerry, taking a cautious observation and giving voice to the feelings of the party. "Here, poor fellow! Here, good lad!"

The good lad remained immovable. The lure of a sandwich produced no better result.

"We can't be losing our day with the brute this way,"

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said McCabe. "Tip up the car. He'll come out then, and no thanks to him."

As the shafts rose heavenwards, the law of gravitation proved too many for the setter and he slowly slid to earth.

"If I only knew your damn name we'd be all right now," said McCabe.

The carman dropped the shafts on to the mare and drove on up the pass, with one side of the car turned up and himself on the other. The yellow mare had, it seemed, only begun her day's work. A prophetic instinct, of the reliable kind that is strictly founded on fact, warned me that we might live to regret her departure.

The dentist's setter had, at sight of the guns, realized that things were better than he had expected, and now preceded us along the edge of the lake with every appearance of enthusiasm. He quartered the ground with professional zeal, he splashed through the sedge, and rattled through thickets of dry reeds, and set successively a heron, a water hen, and something, unseen, that I believe to have been a water rat. After each of these efforts he rushed in upon his quarry, and we called him by all the gun-dog names we had ever heard of from Don to Grouse, from Carlo to Spot, coupled with objurgations on a rising scale. With none of them did we so much as vibrate a chord in his bosom. He was a large dog, with a blunt, stupid face, and a faculty for excitement about nothing that impelled him to bound back to us as often as possible, to gaze in our eyes in brilliant enquiry, and to pant and prance before us with all the fatuity of youth. Had he been able to speak, he would have asked

idiotic questions, of that special breed that exact from their victim a reply of equal imbecility.

The lake and its environs, for the first time in McCabe's experience, yielded nothing; we struck up on to the mountain side, following the course of an angry stream that came racing down from the heights. We worked up through ling and furze and skirted flocks of pale stones that lay in the heather like petrified sheep, and the dog, ranging deliriously, set water-wagtails and anything else that could fly; I believe he would have set a blue-bottle and I said so to McCabe.

"Ah, give him time; he'll settle down," said McCabe, who had a thankfulness for small mercies born of a vast experience of makeshifts; "he might fill the bag for us yet."

We laboured along the flank of the mountain, climbing in and out of small ravines, jumping or wading streams, sloshing through yellow sedgery bog; always with the brown heather running up to the misty sky-line, and always with the same atrocious luck. Once a small pack of grouse got up, very wild, and leagues out of range, thanks to the far-reaching activities of the dog, and once a hermit woodcock exploded out of a clump of furze, and sailed away down the slope, followed by four charges of shot and the red setter, in equally innocuous pursuit. And this, up to luncheon time, was the sum of the morning's sport.

We ate our sandwiches on a high ridge, under the lee of a tumbled pile of boulders, that looked as if they had been about to hurl themselves into the valley, and had thought better of it at the last moment. Between the looming, elephant-grey mountains the mist yielded

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glimpses of the far greenness of the sea, the only green thing in sight in this world of grey and brown. The dog sat opposite to me, and willed me to share my food with him. His steady eyes were charged with the implication that I was a glutton; personally, I abhorred him, yet I found it impossible to give him less than twenty-five per cent of my sandwiches.

"I wonder did Jeffers take him for a bad debt," said McCabe reflectively, as he lit his pipe.

I said I would rather take my chance with the bad debt.

"He might have treated me better," McCabe grumbled on, "seeing that I paid him seven pound ten the day before yesterday, let alone that it was me that was the first to put him up to this—this bit of Shinroe Mountain that never was what you might call strictly preserved. When he came here first he didn't as much as know what cartridge he'd want for it. 'Six and eight,' says I, 'that's a lawyer's fee, so if you think of me you'll not forget it!' And now, if ye please," went on Mr. Jeffers' preceptor in sport, "he's shooting the whole country and selling all he gets! And he wouldn't so much as ask me to go with him; and the excuse he gives, he wouldn't like to have an old hand like me connyshooring his shots! How modest he is!"

I taunted McCabe with having been weak enough thus to cede his rights, and McCabe, who was not at all amused, said that after all it wasn't so much Jeffers that did the harm, but an infernal English Syndicate that had taken the Shinroe shooting this season and paid old Purcell that owned it ten times what it was worth.

"It might be as good for us to get off their ground

now," continued McCabe, rising slowly to his feet, "and try the Lackagreina Valley. The stream below is their bounds."

This, I hasten to say, was the first I had heard of the Syndicate, and I thought it tactless of McCabe to have mentioned it, even though the wrong that we had done them was purely technical. I said to him that I thought the sooner we got off their ground the better, and we descended the hill and crossed the stream, and McCabe said that he could always shoot this next stretch of country when he liked. With this assurance, we turned our backs on the sea and struck inland, tramping for an hour or more through country whose entire barrenness could only be explained on the hypothesis that it has been turned inside out to dry. So far it had failed to achieve even this result.

The weather got thicker, and the sport, if possible, thinner; I had long since lost what bearings I possessed, but McCabe said he knew of a nice patch of scrub in the next valley that always held a cock. The next valley came at last, not without considerable effort, but no patch of scrub was apparent. Some small black and grey cattle stood and looked at us, and a young bull showed an inclination to stalk the dog; it seemed the only sport the valley was likely to afford. McCabe looked round him and looked at his watch, and looked at the sky, which did not seem to be more than a yard above our heads, and said without emotion:

"Did ye think of telling the lad in the glass box in the hall that we might want some dinner kept hot for us? I d'no from Adam where we've got to!"

There was a cattle track along the side of the valley

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which might, though not necessarily, lead somewhere. We pursued it and found that it led, in the first instance, to some black-faced mountain sheep. A cheerful interlude followed, in which the red setter hunted the sheep, and we hunted the setter, and what McCabe said about the dentist in the intervals of the chase was more appropriate to the occasion than to these pages.

When justice had been satiated and the last echo of the last yell of the dog had trembled into silence among the hills, we resumed the cattle-track, which had become a shade more reliable, and, as we proceeded began to give an impression that it might lead somewhere. The day was dying in threatening stillness. Lethargic layers of mist bulged low, like the roof of a marquee, and cloaked every outline that could yield us information. The dog, unchastened by recent events, and full of an idiot optimism, continued to range the hillside.

"I suppose I'll never get the chance to tell Jeffers my opinion of that tom-fool," said McCabe, following with an eye of steel the perambulations of the dog; "the best barrister that ever wore a wig couldn't argue with a dentist! He has his fist half-way down your throat before you can open your mouth; and in any case he'll tell me we couldn't expect any dog would work for us when we forgot his name. What's the brute at now?"

The brute was high above us on the hillside, setting a solitary furze bush with convincing determination, and casting backward looks to see if he were being supported.

"It might be a hare," said McCabe, cocking his gun, with a revival of hope that was almost pathetic, and ascending towards the furze bush.

I neither quickened my pace nor deviated from the

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cattle track, but I must admit that I did so far yield to the theory of the hare as to slip a cartridge into my gun.

McCabe put his gun to his shoulder, lowered it abruptly, and walked up to the furze bush. He stooped and picked up something.

"He's not such a fool after all!" he called out; "ye said he'd set a blue-bottle, and b' Jove ye weren't far out!"

He held up a black object which was neither bird nor beast.

I took the cartridge out of my gun as unobtrusively as possible, McCabe and the dog rejoined me with the product of the day's sport. It was a flat-sided bottle, high-shouldered, with a short neck; McCabe extracted the cork and took a sniff.

"Mountain dew no less!" (Mr. McCabe adhered faithfully to the stock phrases of his youth.) "This never paid the King a shilling! Give me the cup off your flask, Major, till we see what sort it is."

It was pretty rank, and even that seasoned vessel, old McCabe admitted that it might be drinkable in another couple of years, but hardly in less; yet as it ran, a rivulet of fire, through my system, it seemed to me that even the water in my boots became less chill.

"In the public interest we're bound to remove it," said McCabe, putting the bottle into his game-bag; "any man that drank enough of that'd rob a church! Well, anyway, we're not the only people travelling this path," he continued; "whoever put his afternoon tea to hide there will choose a less fashionable promenade next time. But indeed the poor man couldn't be blamed for not knowing

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such a universal genius of a dog was coming this way. Didn't I tell you he'd fill the bag for us?"

He extracted from his pockets a pair of knitted gloves, and put them on; it was equivalent to putting up the shutters.

It was shortly after this that we regained touch with civilisation. Against the profile of a hill a telegraph post suddenly showed itself against the grey of the misty twilight. We made as bee-like a line for it as the nature of the ground permitted, and found ourselves on a narrow road, at a point where it was in the act of making a hairpin turn before plunging into a valley.

"The Beacon Bay road, begad!" said McCabe; "I didn't think we were so far out of our way. Let me see now, which way is this we'd best go."

He stood still and looked round him, taking his bearings; in the solitude the telegraph posts hummed to each other, full of information and entirely reticent.

The position was worse than I thought. By descending into the valley, we should, a couple or three miles farther on, strike the coast road about six miles from home; by ascending the hill and walking four miles, we should arrive at the station of Coppeen Road, and, with luck, there intercept the evening train for Owenford.

"And that's the best of our play, but we'll have to step out," concluded McCabe, shortening the strap of his game-bag, and settling it on his back.

"If I were you," I said, "I'd chuck that stuff away. Apart from everything else, it's about half a ton extra to carry."

"There's many a thing, Major, that you might do that

"I might not do," returned McCabe with solemnity, "and on the contrary sense the statement is equally valid."

He faced the hill with humped shoulders, and fell with no more words into his poacher's stride, and I followed him with the best imitation of it that I could put up after at least six hours of heavy going. McCabe is fifteen years older than I am, and I hope that when I am his age I shall have more consideration than he for those who are younger than myself.

It was now nearly half-past five o'clock, and by the time we had covered a mile of puddles and broken stones it was too dark to see which was which. I felt considerable dubiety about catching the train at Coppeen Road, all the more that it was a flag station, demanding an extra five minutes in hand. Probably the engine-driver had long since abandoned any expectation of passengers at Coppeen Road, and, if he even noticed the signal, would treat it as a practical joke. It was after another quarter of an hour's trudge that a distant sound entered into the silence that had fallen upon McCabe and me, an intermittent grating of wheels upon patches of broken stone, a steady hammer of hoofs.

McCabe halted.

"That car's bound to be going to Owenford," he said; "I wonder could they give us a lift."

A single light (the economical habit of the South of Ireland), began to split the foggy darkness.

"Begad, that's like the go of Reardon's mare!" said McCabe, as the light swung down upon us.

We held the road like highwaymen, we called upon the unseen driver to stop, and he answered to the name of Jerry. This is not a proof of identity in a province where

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every third man is dignified by the name of Jeremiah, but as the car pulled up it was Reardon's yellow mare on which the lamplight fell, and we knew that the fates had relented.

We should certainly not catch the train at Coppeen Road, Jerry assured us; "she had," he said, "a fashion of running early on Monday nights, and in any case if you'd want to catch that thrain, you should make like an amber-bush for her."

We agreed that it was too late for the preparation of an ambush.

"If the Sergeant had no objections," continued Jerry, progressing smoothly towards the tip that would finally be his, "it would be no trouble at all to oblige the gentlemen. Sure it's the big car I have, and it's often I took six, yes, and seven on it, going to the races."

I was now aware of two helmeted presences on the car, and a decorous voice said that the gentlemen were welcome to a side of the car if they liked.

"Is that Sergeant Leonard?" asked McCabe, who knew every policeman in the country. "Well, Sergeant, you've the knack of being on the spot when you're wanted!"

"And sometimes when he's not!" said I.

There was a third and unhelmeted presence on the car, and something of stillness and aloofness in it had led me to diagnose a prisoner.

The suggested dispositions were accomplished. The two policemen and the prisoner wedged themselves on one side of the car, McCabe and I mounted the other, and put the dog on the cushion of the well behind us (his late quarters in the dog-box being occupied by half a

mountain sheep, destined for the hotel larder). The yellow mare went gallantly up to her collar, regardless of her augmented load; McCabe and the Sergeant leaned to each other across the back of the car, and fell into profound and low-toned converse; I smoked, and the dog, propping his wet back against mine, made friends with the prisoner. It may be the Irish blood in me that is responsible for the illicit sympathy with a prisoner which sometimes incommoded me; I certainly bestowed some of it upon the captive, sandwiched between two stalwarts of the R. I. U., and learning that the strong arm of the Law was a trifle compared with the rest of its person.

"What sport had you, Major?" enquired Jerry, as we slackened speed at a hill.

I was sitting at the top of the car, under his elbow, and he probably thought I was feeling neglected during the heart-to-heart confidences of McCabe and the Sergeant.

"Not a feather," said I.

"Sure the birds couldn't be in it this weather," said Jerry considerably; he had in his time condoled with many sportsmen. "I am after talking to a man in Coppeen Road station, that was carrying the game bag for them gentlemen that has Mr. Purcell's shooting on Shinroe Mountain, and what had the four of them after the day—only one jack-snipe!"

"They went one better than we did," I said, but as was intended, I felt cheered—"what day were they there?"

"To-day, sure!" answered Jerry, with faint surprise, "and they hadn't their luncheon hardly ate when they met one on the mountain that told them he seen two

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fellas walking it, with guns and a dog, no more than an hour before them. 'That'll do!' says they, and they turned about and back with them to tell the police."

"Did they see the fellows?" I asked lightly, after a panic-stricken pause.

"They did not. Sure they said if they seen them, they'd shoot them like rooks," replied Jerry, "and they would, too. It's what the man was saying if they cot them lads to-day they'd have left them in the way they'd be given up by both doctor and priest. O, they're fierce altogether!"

I received this information in a silence that was filled to bursting with the desire to strangle McCabe.

Jerry leaned over my shoulder, and lowered his voice.

"They were saying in Coppeen Road that there was a gentleman that came on a mothor-bike this morning early, and he had Shinroe shot out by ten o'clock, and on with him then up the country; and it isn't the first time he was in it. It's a pity those gentlemen couldn't ketch *him*. *They'd* mothor-bike him!"

It was apparent that the poaching of the motor-bicycle upon the legitimate preserves of carmen was responsible for this remarkable sympathy with the law; I, at all events, had it to my credit that I had not gone poaching on a motor-bicycle.

Just here McCabe emerged from the heart-to-heart, and nudged me in the ribs with a confederate elbow. I did not respond, being in no mood for confederacy, certainly not with McCabe.

"The Sergeant is after telling me this prisoner he has here is prosecuted at the instance of that Syndicate I was telling you about," he whispered hoarsely in my ear,

"for hunting Shinroe with greyhounds. He was cited to appear last week, and he didn't turn up; he'll be before you to-morrow. I hope the Bench will have a fellow-feeling for a fellow-creature!"

The whisper ended in a wheezy cough that was Mr. McCabe's equivalent for a laugh. It was very close to my ear, and it had somewhere in it the metallic click I had noticed before.

I grunted forbiddingly, and turned my back upon McCabe, as far as it was possible to do so on an outside car, and we hammered on through the darkness. Once the solitary lamp illumined the prolonged countenance of a donkey, and once or twice we came on a party of sheep lying on the road; they melted into the night at the minatory whistle that is dedicated to sheep, and on each of these occasions the dentist's dog was shaken by strong shudders, and made a convulsive attempt to spring from the car in pursuit. We were making good traveling on a long down-grade, a smell of seaweed was in the mist, and a salt taste was on my lips. It was very cold; I had no overcoat, my boots had plumbed the depths of many bog-holes, and I found myself shivering like the dog.

It was at this point that I felt McCabe fumbling at his game-bag, that lay between us on the seat. By dint of a sympathy that I would have died rather than betray, I divined he was going to tap that fount of contraband fire that he owed to the dentist's dog. It was, apparently, a matter of some difficulty; I felt him groping and tugging at the straps.

I said to myself, waveringly: "Old blackguard! I won't touch it if he offers it to me."

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McCabe went on fumbling: "Damn these woolley gloves. I can't do a hand's turn with them."

In the dark I could not see what followed, but I felt him raise his arm. There was a jerk, followed by a howl.

"Hold on!" roared McCabe, with a new and strange utterance. "Shtop the horth! I've dropped me teeth!"

The driver did his best, but with the push of the hill behind her the mare took some stopping.

"Oh, murder! oh, murder!" wailed McCabe, lisping thickly, "I pulled them out o' me head with the glove, trying to get it off!" He scrambled off the car. "Give me the lamp! Me lovely new teeth——"

I detached the lamp from its socket with all speed, and handed it to McCabe, who hurried back on our tracks. From motives of delicacy I remained on the car, as did also the rest of the party. A minute or two passed in awed silence, while the patch of light went to and fro on the dark road. It seemed an intrusion to offer assistance, and an uncertainty as to whether to allude to the loss as "them," or "it," made enquiries a difficulty.

"For goodneth 'ake have none o' ye any matcheth, that ye couldn't come and help me?" demanded the voice of McCabe, in indignation blurred pathetically by his gosling-like lisp.

I went to his assistance, and refrained with an effort from suggesting the employment of that all-accomplished setter, the dentist's dog, in the search; it was not the moment for pleasantry. Not yet.

We crept along, bent double, like gorillas; the long strips of broken stones yielded nothing, the long puddles between them were examined in vain.

"I'll give you half a crown this minute, McCabe," said I brutally, "if you'll say 'Sessions'!"

Here the Sergeant joined us, striking matches as he came. He worked his way into the sphere of the car-lamp, he was most painstaking and sympathetic, and his oblique allusions to the object of the search were a miracle of tact.

"I see something white beyond you, Mr. McCabe," he said respectfully; "might that be them?"

McCabe swung the lamp as indicated.

"No, it might not. It's a pebble," he replied, with pardonable irascibility.

Silence followed, and we worked our way up the hill.

"What's that, sir?" ventured the Sergeant, with some excitement, stopping again and pointing. "I think I see the gleam of the gold."

"Ah, nonthenth, man! They're vulcanite!" snapped McCabe, more irascibly than ever.

The word nonsense was a disastrous effort, and I withdrew into the darkness to enjoy it.

"What colour might vulcanite be, sir?" murmured a voice beside me.

Jerry had joined the search-party; he lighted, as he spoke, an inch of candle. On hearing my explanation he remarked that it was a bad chance, and at the same instant the inch of candle slipped from his fingers and fell into a puddle.

"Divil mend ye for a candle! Have ye a match, sir? I haven't a one left!"

As it happened I had no matches, my only means of making a light being a patent tinder-box.

"Have you a match there?" I called out to the invisible

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occupants of the car, which was about fifteen or twenty yards away, advancing towards it as I spoke. The constable politely jumped off and came to meet me.

As he was in the act of handing me his matchbox, the car drove away down the hill.

I state the fact with the bald simplicity that is appropriate to great disaster. To be exact, the yellow mare sprang from inaction into a gallop, as if she had been stung by a wasp, and had a start of at least fifty yards before either the carman or the constable could get under way. The carman, uttering shrill and menacing whistles, led the chase, the constable, though badly hampered by his greatcoat, was a good second, and the Sergeant, making the best of a bad start, followed them into the night.

The yellow mare's head was for home and her load was on its own legs on the road behind her; hysterical yelps from the dentist's dog indicated that he also was on his own legs, and was, in all human probability, jumping at the mare's nose. As the rapturous beat of her hoofs died away on the down-grade, I recalled the assertion that she had pulled the lungs out of two men, and it seemed to me that the prisoner had caught the psychological moment on the hop.

"They'll not ketch him," said McCabe, with the flat calm of a broken man, "not to-night anyway. Nor for a week maybe. He'll take to the mountains."

The silence of the hills closed in upon us, and we were left in our original position, plus the lamp of the car, and minus our guns, the dentist's dog, and McCabe's teeth.

Far, far away, from the direction of Coppeen Road, that sinister outpost, where evil rumours were launched,

and the night trains were waylaid by the amber-bushes, a steady tapping sound advanced towards us. "A motor-bike!" ejaculated McCabe. "Take the light and thtop him—he wouldn't know what I wath thaying—if he run over them they're done for! For the love of Merthy tell him to keep the left thide of the road!"

I took the lamp, and ran towards the bicyclist, waving it as I ran. The star, now a moon of acetylene ferocity, slackened speed, and a voice behind it said: "What's up?"

I stated the case with telegraphic brevity and the motor-bicycle slid slowly by me. Its rider had a gun slung across his back, my lamp revealed a crammed game-bag on the carrier behind him.

"Sorry I can't assist you," he called back to me, keeping carefully on the left-hand side of the road, "but I have an appointment." Then, as an afterthought, "There's a first rate dentist in Owenford!"

The red eye of the tail light glowed a farewell and passed on, like all the rest, into the night.

I rejoined McCabe. He clutched my arm and shook it.

"That wath Jefferth! *Jefferth*, I tell ye! The dirty poacher! And hith bag full of our birdth!"

It was not till the lamp went out, which it did some ten minutes afterwards, that I drew McCabe from the scene of his loss, gently, as one deals with the bereaved, and faced with him the six-mile walk to Owenford.

THE LAST OF BATTLING BILLSON

By P. G. WODEHOUSE

THE Theatre Royal, Llundudno, is in the middle of the principal thoroughfare of that repellent town, and immediately opposite its grubby main entrance there is a lamp-post. Under this lamp-post as I approached, a man was standing. He was a large man, and his air was that of one who had recently passed through some trying experience. There was dust on his person, and he had lost his hat. At the sound of my footsteps he turned, and the rays of the lamp revealed the familiar features of my old friend Stanley Featherstonhaugh Utridge.

"Great Scott!" I ejaculated. "What are you doing here?"

There was no possibility of hallucination. It was the man himself in the flesh. And what Utridge, a free agent, could be doing in Llundudno was more than I could imagine. Situated, as its name implies, in Wales, it is a dark, dingy, dishevelled spot, inhabited by tough and sinister men with suspicious eyes and three-day beards; and to me, after a mere forty minutes' sojourn

From *He Rather Enjoyed It*, by P. G. Wodehouse, copyright, 1925, George H. Doran Company, publishers.

in the place, it was incredible that any one should be there except on compulsion.

Ukridge gaped at me incredulously.

"Corky, old horse!" he said, "this is, upon my Sam, without exception the most amazing event in the world's history. The last bloke I expected to see."

"Same here. Is anything the matter?" I asked, eyeing his bedraggled appearance.

"Matter? I should say something was the matter!" snorted Ukridge, astonishment giving way to righteous indignation. "They chucked me out!"

"Chucked you out? Who? Where from?"

"This infernal theatre, laddie. After taking my good money, dash it! At least, I got in on my face, but that has nothing to do with the principle of the thing. Corky, my boy, don't you ever go about this world seeking for justice, because there's no such thing under the broad vault of heaven. I had just gone out for a breather after the first act, and when I came back I found some fiend had pinched my seat. And just because I tried to lift the fellow out by the ears, a dozen hired assassins swooped down and shot me out. Me, I'll trouble you! The injured party! Upon my Sam," he said, heatedly, with a longing look at the closed door, "I've a dashed good mind to——"

"I shouldn't," I said soothingly. "After all, what does it matter? It's just one of those things that are bound to happen from time to time. The man of affairs passes them off with a light laugh."

"Yes, but——"

"Come and have a drink."

The suggestion made him waver. The light of battle

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died down in his eyes. He stood for a moment in thought.

"You wouldn't bung a brick through the window?" he queried doubtfully.

"No, no!"

"Perhaps you're right."

He linked his arm in mine and we crossed the road to where the lights of a public-house shone like heartening beacons. The crisis was over.

"Corky," said Ukridge, warily laying down his mug of beer on the counter a few minutes later, lest emotion should cause him to spill any of its precious contents, "I can't get over, I simply cannot get over the astounding fact of your being in this blighted town."

I explained my position. My presence in Llundnno was due to the fact that the paper which occasionally made use of my services as a special writer had sent me to compose a fuller and more scholarly report than its local correspondent seemed capable of concocting of the activities of one Evan Jones, the latest of those revivalists who periodically convulse the emotions of the Welsh mining population. His last and biggest meeting was to take place next morning at eleven o'clock.

"But what are you doing here?" I asked.

"What am *I* doing here?" said Ukridge. "Who, me? Why, where else would you expect me to be? Haven't you heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Haven't you seen the posters?"

"What posters? I only arrived an hour ago."

"My dear old horse! Then naturally you aren't abreast

of local affairs." He drained his mug, breathed contentedly, and led me out into the street. "Look!"

He was pointing to a poster, boldly lettered in red and black, which decorated the side-wall of the Bon Ton Millinery Emporium. The street-lighting system of Llundnno is defective, but I was able to read what it said:

ODDFELLOW'S HALL
Special Ten-Round Contest.

LLOYD THOMAS
(Llundnno)

vs.

BATTLING BILLSON
(Bermondsey)

"Comes off to-morrow night," said Ukridge. "And I don't mind telling you, laddie, that I expect to make a colossal fortune."

"Are you still managing the Battler?" I said, surprised at this dogged perseverance. "I should have thought that after your two last experiences you would have had about enough of it."

"Oh, he means business this time! I've been talking to him like a father."

"How much does he get?"

"Twenty quid."

"Twenty quid? Well, where does the colossal fortune come in? Your share will only be a tenner."

"No, my boy. You haven't got onto my devilish shrewdness. I'm not in on the purse at all this time. I'm the management."

"The management?"

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"Well, part of it. You remember Isaac O'Brien, the bookie I was partner with till that chump Loonie Coote smashed the business? Izzy Previn is his real name. We've gone shares in this thing. Izzy came down a week ago, hired the hall, and looked after the advertising and so on, and I arrived with good old Billson this afternoon. We're giving him twenty quid, and the other fellow's getting another twenty; and all the rest of the cash Izzy and I split on a fifty-fifty basis. Affluence, laddie! That's what it means. Affluence beyond the dreams of a Monte Cristo. Owing to this Jones fellow the place is crowded, and every sportsman for miles around will be there to-morrow at five bob a head, cheaper seats two-and-six, and standing room one shilling. Add lemonade and fried fish privileges, and you have a proposition almost without parallel in the annals of commerce. I couldn't be more on the velvet if they gave me a sack and a shovel and let me loose in the Mint."

I congratulated him in suitable terms.

"How is the Battler?" I asked.

"Trained to an ounce. Come and see him to-morrow morning."

"I can't come in the morning. I've got to go to this Jones meeting."

"Oh, yes. Well, make it early in the afternoon, then. Don't come later than three, because he will be resting. We're at Number Seven, Caerleon Street. Ask for the Cap and Feathers public-house, and turn sharp to the left."

I was in a curiously uplifted mood on the following afternoon as I set out to pay my respects to Mr. Billson. This was the first time I had had occasion to attend one

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of these revival meetings, and the effect it had had on me was to make me feel as if I had been imbibing large quantities of champagne to the accompaniment of a very large orchestra. Even before the revivalist rose to speak the proceedings had had an effervescent quality singularly unsettling to the sober mind, for the vast gathering had begun to sing hymns directly they took their seats; and while the opinion I had formed of the inhabitants of Llundnno was not high, there was no denying their vocal powers. There is something about a Welsh voice when raised in song that no other voice seems to possess—a creepy, heart-searching quality that gets right into a man's inner consciousness and stirs it up with a pole. And on top of this had come Evan Jones's address.

It did not take me long to understand why this man had gone through the countryside like a flame. He had magnetism, intense earnestness and the voice of a prophet crying in the wilderness. His fiery eyes seemed to single out each individual in the hall, and every time he paused sighings and wailings went up like the smoke of a furnace. And after speaking for what I discovered with amazement on consulting my watch was considerably over an hour, he stopped. And I blinked like an aroused somnambulist, shook myself to make sure I was still there, and came away. And now, as I walked in search of the Cap and Feathers, I was, as I say, oddly exhilarated: and I was strolling along in a sort of trance when a sudden uproar jerked me from my thoughts. I looked about me, and saw the sign of the Cap and Feathers suspended over a building across the street.

It was a dubious-looking hostelry in a dubious neighbourhood: and the sounds proceeding from its interior

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were not reassuring to a peace-loving pedestrian. There was a good deal of shouting going on and much smashing of glass; and, as I stood there, the door flew open and a familiar figure emerged rather hastily. A moment later there appeared in the doorway a woman.

She was a small woman, but she carried the largest and most intimidating mop I had ever seen. It dripped dirty water as she brandished it; and the man, glancing apprehensively over his shoulder, proceeded rapidly on his way.

"Hullo, Mr. Billson!" I said, as he shot by me.

It was not, perhaps, the best-chosen moment for endeavouring to engage him in light conversation. He showed no disposition whatever to linger. He vanished round the corner, and the woman, with a few winged words, gave her mop a victorious flourish and re-entered the public-house. I walked on, and a little later a huge figure stepped cautiously out of an alley-way and fell into step at my side.

"Didn't recognize you, mister," said Mr. Billson, apologetically.

"You seemed in rather a hurry," I agreed.

"R!" said Mr. Billson, and a thoughtful silence descended upon him for a space. "Who," I asked, tactlessly, perhaps, "was your lady friend?"

Mr. Billson looked a trifle sheepish. Unnecessarily, in my opinion. Even heroes may legitimately quail before a mop wielded by an angry woman.

"She came out of a back room," he said, with embarrassment. "Started makin' a fuss when she saw what I'd done. So I come away. You can't dot a woman," argued Mr. Billson, chivalrously.

"Certainly not," I agreed. "But what was the trouble?"

"I been doin' good," said Mr. Billson, virtuously.

"Doing good?"

"Spillin' their beers."

"Whose beers?"

"All of their beers. I went in and there was a lot of sinful fellers drinkin' beers. So I spilled 'em. All of 'em. Walked round and spilled all of them beers, one after the other. Not 'arf surprised them pore sinners wasn't," said Mr. Billson, with what sounded to me not unlike a worldly chuckle.

"I can readily imagine it."

"Huh?"

"I say I bet they were."

"R!" said Mr. Billson. He frowned. "Beer," he proceeded, with cold austerity, "ain't right. Sinful, that's what beer is. It stingeth like a serpent and biteth like a ruddy adder."

My mouth watered a little. Beer like that was what I had been scouring the country for for years. I thought it imprudent, however, to say so. For some reason which I could not fathom, my companion, once as fond of his half-pint as the next man, seemed to have conceived a puritanical hostility to the beverage. I decided to change the subject.

"I'm looking forward to seeing you fight to-night," I said.

He eyed me woodenly.

"Me?"

"Yes, at the Oddfellows' Hall, you know."

He shook his head.

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"I ain't fighting at no Oddfellows' Hall," he replied. "Not at no Oddfellows' Hall nor nowhere else I'm not fighting, not to-morrow nor no night." He pondered stolidly, and then, as if coming to the conclusion that his last sentence could be improved by the addition of a negative, added "No!"

And having said this, he suddenly stopped and stiffened like a pointing dog; and, looking up to see what interesting object by the wayside had attracted his notice, I perceived that we were standing beneath another public-house sign, that of the Blue Boar. Its windows were hospitably open, and through them came a musical clinking of glasses. Mr. Billson licked his lips with a quiet relish.

"'Scuse me, mister," he said, and left me abruptly.

My one thought now was to reach Ukridge as quickly as possible, in order to acquaint him with these sinister developments. For I was startled. More, I was alarmed and uneasy. In one of the star performers at a special ten-round contest, scheduled to take place that evening, Mr. Billson's attitude seemed to me peculiar, not to say disquieting. So, even though a sudden crash and uproar from the interior of the Blue Boar called invitingly to me to linger, I hurried on, and neither stopped, looked nor listened until I stood on the steps of Number Seven, Caerleon Street.

And eventually, after my prolonged ringing and knocking had finally induced a female of advanced years to come up and answer the door, I found Ukridge lying on a horsehair sofa in the far corner of the sitting-room.

I unloaded my grave news. It was wasting time to try to break it gently.

"I've just seen Billson," I said, "and he seems to be

in rather a strange mood. In fact, I'm sorry to say, old man, he rather gave me the impression. . . ."

"That he wasn't going to fight to-night?" said Ukridge, with a strange calm. "Quite correct. He isn't. He's just been in here to tell me so. What I like about the man is his consideration for all concerned. *He* doesn't want to upset anybody's arrangements."

"But what's the trouble? Is he kicking about only getting twenty pounds?"

"No. He thinks fighting's sinful!"

"What?"

"Nothing more nor less, Corky, my boy. Like chumps, we took our eyes off him for half a second this morning, and he sneaked off to that revival meeting. Went out shortly after a light and wholesome breakfast for what he called a bit of a mooch round, and came in half-an-hour ago a changed man. Full of loving-kindness, curse him. Nasty shifty gleam in his eye. Told us he thought fighting sinful and it was all off, and then buzzed out to spread the Word."

I was shaken to the core. Wilberforce Billson, the peerless but temperamental Battler, had never been an ideal pugilist to manage, but hitherto he had drawn the line at anything like this. Other little problems which he might have brought up for his manager to solve might have been overcome by patience and tact; but not this one. The psychology of Mr. Billson was as an open book to me. He possessed one of those single-track minds, capable of accommodating but one idea at a time, and he had the tenacity of the simple soul. Argument would leave him unshaken. On that bone-like head Reason would beat in vain. And, these things being so, I was at a loss

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to account for Ukridge's extraordinary calm. His fortitude in the hour of ruin amazed me.

His next remark, however, offered an explanation.

"We're putting on a substitute," he said.

I was relieved.

"Oh, you've got a substitute? That's a bit of luck. Where did you find him?"

"As a matter of fact, laddie, I've decided to go on myself."

"What! You?"

"Only way out, my boy. No other solution."

I stared at the man. Years of the closest acquaintance with S. F. Ukridge had rendered me almost surprise-proof at anything he might do, but this was too much.

"Do you mean to tell me that you seriously intend to go out there to-night and appear in the ring?" I cried.

"Perfectly straightforward business-like proposition, old man," said Ukridge, stoutly. "I'm in excellent shape. I sparred with Billson every day while he was training."

"Yes, but——"

"The fact is, laddie, you don't realize my potentialities. Recently, it's true I've allowed myself to become slack, and what you might call enervated, but, damme, when I was on that trip in that tramp-steamer, scarcely a week used to go by without my having a good earnest scrap with somebody. Nothing barred," said Ukridge, musing lovingly on the care-free past, "except biting and bottles."

"Yes, but, hang it—a professional pugilist!"

"Well, to be absolutely accurate, laddie," said Ukridge, suddenly dropping the heroic manner and becoming confidential, "the thing's going to be fixed. Izzy Previn has

seen the bloke Thomas's manager, and has arranged a gentleman's agreement. The manager, a Class A blood-sucker, insists on us giving his man another twenty pounds after the fight, but that can't be helped. In return, the Thomas bloke consents to play light for three rounds, at the end of which period, laddie, he will tap me on the side of the head and I shall go down and out, a popular loser. What's more, I'm allowed to hit him hard—once—just so long as it isn't on the nose. So you see, a little tact, a little diplomacy, and the whole thing fixed up as satisfactorily as any one could wish."

"But suppose the audience demands its money back when they find they're going to see a substitute?"

"My dear old horse," protested Ukridge, "surely you don't imagine that a man with a business head like mine overlooked that? Naturally, I'm going to fight as Battling Billson. Nobody knows him in this town. I'm a good big chap, just as much a heavyweight as he is. No, laddie, pick how you will you can't pick a flaw in this."

"Why mayn't you hit him on the nose?"

"I don't know. People have these strange whims. And now, Corky, my boy, I think you had better leave me. I ought to relax."

The Oddfellows' Hall was certainly filling up nicely when I arrived that night. Indeed, it seemed as though Llundnno's devotees of sport would cram it to the roof. I took my place in the line before the pay-window, and, having completed the business end of the transaction, went in and inquired my way to the dressing-rooms. And presently, after wandering through divers passages, I came upon Ukridge, clad for the ring and swathed in his familiar yellow mackintosh.

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"You're going to have a wonderful house," I said. "The populace is rolling up in shoals."

He received the information with a strange lack of enthusiasm. I looked at him in concern and was disquieted by his forlorn appearance. That face which had beamed so triumphantly at our last meeting was pale and set. Those eyes, which normally shone with the light of an unquenchable optimism, seemed dull and careworn. And even as I looked at him he seemed to rouse himself from a stupor and, reaching out for his shirt, which hung on a near-by peg, proceeded to pull it over his head.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

His head popped out of the shirt, and he eyed me wanly.

"I'm off," he announced, briefly.

"Off? How do you mean, off?" I tried to soothe what I took to be an eleventh-hour attack of stage-fright. "You'll be all right."

Ukridge laughed hollowly.

"Once the gong goes, you'll forget the crowd."

"It isn't the crowd," said Ukridge, in a pale voice, climbing into his trousers. "Corky, old man," he went on earnestly, "if ever you feel your angry passions rising to the point where you want to swat a stranger in a public place, restrain yourself. There's nothing in it. This bloke Thomas was in here a moment ago with his manager to settle the final details. He's the fellow I had the trouble with at the theatre last night!"

"The man you pulled out of the seat by his ears?" I gasped.

Ukridge nodded.

"Recognized me at once, confound him, and it was all

his manager, a thoroughly decent cove whom I liked, could do to prevent him getting at me there and then."

"Good Lord!" I said, aghast at this grim development, yet thinking how thoroughly characteristic it was of Ukridge, when he had a whole townful of people to quarrel with, to pick the one professional pugilist.

At this moment, when Ukridge was lacing his left shoe, the door opened and a man came in.

The newcomer was stout, dark, and beady-eyed, and from his manner of easy comradeship and the fact that when he spoke he supplemented words with the language of the waving palm, I deduced that this must be Mr. Izzy Previn, recently trading as Isaac O'Brien. He was cheeriness itself.

"Vell," he said, with ill-timed exuberance, "how'th the boy?"

The boy cast a sour look at him.

"The house," proceeded Mr. Previn, with an almost lyrical enthusiasm, "is abtholutely full. Crammed, jammed, and packed. They're hanging from the roof by their eyelids. It'th goin' to be a knockout."

The expression, considering the circumstances, could hardly have been less happily chosen. Ukridge winced painfully; then spoke in no uncertain voice.

"I'm not going to fight!"

Mr. Previn's exuberance fell from him like a garment. His cigar dropped from his mouth and his beady eyes glittered with sudden consternation.

"What do you mean?"

"Rather an unfortunate thing has happened," I explained. "It seems that this man Thomas is a fellow Ukridge had trouble with at the theatre last night."

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"What do you mean, Ukridge?" broke in Mr. Previn. "This is Battling Billson."

"I've told Corky all about it," said Ukridge over his shoulder as he laced his right shoe. "Old pal of mine."

"Oh!" said Mr. Previn, relieved. "Of course, if Mr. Corky is a friend of yours and quite understands that all this is quite private among ourselves and don't want talking about outside, all right. But what were you thaying? I can't make head or tail of it. How do you mean you are not goin' to fight? Of course you're goin' to fight."

"Thomas was in here just now," I said. "Ukridge and he had a row at the theatre last night, and naturally Ukridge is afraid he will go back on the agreement."

"Nonthense," said Mr. Previn, and his manner was that of one soothing a refractory child. "*He* won't go back on the agreement. He promised he'd play light and he will play light. Gave me his word as a gentleman."

"He isn't a gentleman," Ukridge pointed out, moodily.

"But lithen!"

"I'm going to get out of here as quick as I dashed well can."

"Conthider!" pleaded Mr. Previn, clawing great chunks out of the air. Ukridge began to button his collar.

"Reflect!" moaned Mr. Previn. "There's that lovely audience all sitting out there, jammed like thardines, waiting for the thing to start. Do you expect me to go and tell 'em there ain't goin' to be no fight? I'm thurprised at you," said Mr. Previn, trying an appeal to his pride. "Where's your manly spirit? A big, husky feller like you, that's done all sorts of scrappin' in your time——"

"Not," Ukridge pointed out coldly, "with any damned

professional pugilists who've got a grievance against me."

"*He* won't hurt you."

"He won't get the chance."

"You'll be as safe and cosy in that ring with him as if you was playing ball with your little thister."

Ukridge said he hadn't got a little sister.

"But think!" implored Mr. Previn, flapping like a seal. "Think of the money! Do you realize we'll have to return it all, every penny of it?"

A spasm of pain passed over Ukridge's face, but he continued buttoning his collar.

"And not only that," said Mr. Previn, "but, if you ask me, they'll be so mad when they hear there ain't goin' to be no fight, they'll lynch me."

Ukridge seemed to regard this possibility with calm.

"And you, too," added Mr. Previn.

Ukridge started. It was a plausible theory, and one that had not occurred to him before. He paused irresolutely. And at this moment a man came hurrying in.

"What's the matter?" he demanded fussily. "Thomas has been in the ring for five minutes. Isn't your man ready?"

"In one-half tick," said Mr. Previn. He turned meaningly to Ukridge. "That is right, ain't it? You'll be ready in half a tick?"

Ukridge nodded wanly. In silence he shed shirt, trousers, shoes and collar, parting from them as if they were old friends whom he never expected to see again. One wistful glance he cast at his mackintosh, lying forlornly across a chair; and then, with more than a suggestion of a funeral procession, we started down the corridor that led to the main hall. The hum of many

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voices came to us; there was a sudden blaze of light, and we were there.

I must say for the sport-loving citizens of Llundnno that they appeared to be fair-minded men. Stranger in their midst though he was, they gave Ukridge an excellent reception as he climbed into the ring; and for a moment, such is the tonic effect of applause on a large scale, his depression seemed to lift. A faint, gratified smile played about his drawn mouth and I think it would have developed into a bashful grin, had he not at this instant caught sight of the redoubtable Mr. Thomas towering massively across the way. I saw him blink, as one who, thinking absently of this and that, walks suddenly into a lamp-post; and his look of unhappiness returned.

My heart bled for him. If the offer of my little savings in the bank could have transported him then and there to the safety of his London lodgings, I would have made it unreservedly. Mr. Previn had disappeared, leaving me standing at the ringside, and as nobody seemed to object I remained there, thus getting an excellent view of the mass of bone and sinew that made up Lloyd Thomas. And there was certainly plenty of him to see.

Mr. Thomas was, I should imagine, one of those men who do not look their most formidable in mufti—for otherwise I could not conceive how even the fact that he had stolen his seat could have led Ukridge to lay the hand of violence upon him. In the exiguous costume of the ring he looked one from whom the sensible man would suffer almost any affront with meekness. He was about six foot in height, and wherever a man could bulge with muscle, he bulged. For a moment my anxiety for Ukridge was tinged with a wistful regret that I should never see

this sinewy citizen in action with Mr. Billson. It would, I mused, have been a battle worth coming even to Llan-indnno to see.

The referee, meanwhile, had been introducing the principals in the curt impressive fashion of referees. He now retired, and with a strange foreboding note a gong sounded on the farther side of the ring. The seconds scuttled under the ropes. The man Thomas, struggling—it seemed to me—with powerful emotions, came ponderously out of his corner.

In these reminiscences of a vivid and varied career, it is as a profound thinker that I have for the most part had occasion to portray Stanley Featherstonehaugh Utridge. I was now to be reminded that he also had it in him to be a doer. Even as Mr. Thomas shuffled towards him, his left fist shot out and thudded against the other's ribs. In short, in a delicate and difficult situation, Utridge was comporting himself with an adequacy that surprised me. However great might have been his reluctance to embark on this contest, once in he was doing well.

And then half-way through the first round, the truth dawned upon me.

Injured though Mr. Thomas had been, the gentleman's agreement still held. The word of a Thomas was as good as his bond. Poignant though his dislike of Utridge might be, nevertheless, having pledged himself to mildness and self-restraint for the first three rounds, he meant to abide by the contract. Probably, in the interval between his visit to Utridge's dressing-room and his appearance in the ring, his manager had been talking earnestly to him. At any rate, whether it was managerial authority or his own sheer nobility of character that influenced him,

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the fact remains that he treated Ukridge, with a quite remarkable forbearance, and the latter reached his corner at the end of round one practically intact.

And it was this that undid him. No sooner had the gong sounded for round two than out he pranced from his corner, thoroughly above himself. He bounded at Mr. Thomas like a Dervish.

I could read his thoughts as if he had spoken them. Nothing could be clearer than that he had altogether failed to grasp the true position of affairs. Instead of recognizing his adversary's forbearance for what it was and being decently grateful for it, he was filled with a sinful pride. Here, he told himself, was a man who had a solid grievance against him—and, dash it, the fellow couldn't hurt him a bit. What the whole thing boiled down to, he felt, was that he, Ukridge, was better than he had suspected, a man to be reckoned with and one who could show a distinguished gathering of patrons of sport something worth looking at. The consequence was that, where any sensible person would have grasped the situation at once and endeavoured to show his appreciation by toying with Mr. Thomas in gingerly fashion, whispering soothing compliments into his ear during the clinches, and generally trying to lay the foundations of a beautiful friendship against the moment when the gentleman's agreement should lapse, Ukridge committed the one unforgivable act. There was a brief moment of fiddling and feinting in the centre of the ring, then a sharp smacking sound, a startled yelp, and Mr. Thomas, with gradually reddening eye, leaning against the ropes and muttering to himself in Welsh.

Ukridge had hit him on the nose!

Once more I must pay a tribute to the fair-mindedness of the sportsmen of Llundnno. The stricken man was one of them—possibly Llundnno's favourite son—yet nothing could have exceeded the heartiness with which they greeted the visitor's achievement. A shout went up as if Ukridge had done each individual present a personal favour. It continued as he advanced buoyantly upon his antagonist, and—to show how entirely Llundnno audiences render themselves impartial and free from any personal bias—it became redoubled as Mr. Thomas, swinging a fist like a ham, knocked Ukridge flat on his back. Whatever happened, so long as it was sufficiently violent, seemed to be all right with that broad-minded audience.

Ukridge heaved himself laboriously to one knee. His sensibilities had been ruffled by this unexpected blow, about fifteen times as hard as the others he had received since the beginning of the affray, but he was a man of mettle and determination. However humbly he might quail before a threatening landlady, or however nimbly he might glide down a side street at the sight of an approaching creditor, there was nothing wrong with his fighting heart when it came to a straight issue between man and man, untinged by the financial element. He struggled painfully to his feet, while Mr. Thomas, now definitely abandoning the gentleman's agreement, hovered about him with ready fists, only restrained by the fact that one of Ukridge's gloves still touched the floor.

It was at this tensest of moments that a voice spoke in my ear. "'Alf a mo', mister!"

A hand pushed me gently aside. Something large ob-

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scured the lights. And Wilberforce Billson, squeezing under the ropes, clambered into the ring.

For the purposes of the historian it was a good thing that for the first few moments after this astounding occurrence a dazed silence held the audience in its grip. Otherwise, it might have been difficult to probe motives and explain underlying causes. I think the spectators were either too surprised to shout, or else they entertained for a few brief seconds the idea that Mr. Billson was the forerunner of a posse of plain-clothes police about to raid the place. At any rate, for a space they were silent, and he was enabled to say his say.

"Fightin'," bellowed Mr. Billson, "ain't right!"

There was an uneasy rustle in the audience. The voice of the referee came thinly, saying, "Here! Hi!"

"Sinful," explained Mr. Billson, in a voice like a fog-horn.

His oration was interrupted by Mr. Thomas, who was endeavouring to get round him and attack Utridge. The Battler pushed him gently back.

"Gents," he roared, "I, too, have been a man of violence! I 'ave struck men in anger. R, yes! But I 'ave seen the light. Oh, my brothers——"

The rest of his remarks were lost. With a startling suddenness the frozen silence melted. In every part of the hall indignant seatholders were rising to state their views.

But it is doubtful whether, even if he had been granted a continuance of their attention, Mr. Billson would have spoken to much greater length; for at this moment Lloyd Thomas, who had been gnawing at the strings of his gloves with the air of a man who is able to stand just so

much and whose limit has been exceeded, now suddenly shed those obstacles to the freer expression of self, and, advancing barehanded, smote Mr. Billson violently on the jaw.

Mr. Billson turned. He was pained, one could see that, but more spiritually than physically. For a moment he seemed uncertain how to proceed. Then he turned the other cheek.

The fermenting Mr. Thomas smote that, too.

There was no vacillation or uncertainty now about Wilberforce Billson. He plainly considered that he had done all that could reasonably be expected of any pacifist. A man has only two cheeks. He flung up a mast-like arm to block a third blow, countered with an accuracy and spirit which sent his aggressor reeling to the ropes; and then, swiftly removing his coat, went into action with the unregenerate zeal that had made him the petted hero of a hundred water-fronts. And I, tenderly scooping Ukridge up as he dropped from the ring, hurried him away along the corridor to his dressing-room. I would have given much to remain and witness a mix-up which, if the police did not interfere, promised to be the battle of the ages, but the claims of friendship are paramount.

Ten minutes later, however, when Ukridge, washed, clothed, and restored as near to the normal as a man may be who has received the full weight of a Lloyd Thomas on a vital spot, was reaching for his mackintosh, there filtered through the intervening doors and passageways a sudden roar so compelling that my sporting spirit declined to ignore it.

"Back in a minute, old man," I said.

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And, urged by that ever-swelling roar, I cantered back to the hall.

In the interval, during which I had been ministering to my stricken friend, a certain decorum seemed to have been restored to the proceedings. The conflict had lost its first riotous abandon. Upholders of the decencies of debate had induced Mr. Thomas to resume his gloves, and a pair had also been thrust upon the Battler. Moreover, it was apparent that the etiquette of the tourney now governed the conflict, for rounds had been introduced, and one had just finished as I came in view of the ring. Mr. Billson was leaning back in a chair in one corner undergoing treatment by his seconds, and in the opposite corner loomed Mr. Thomas; and one sight of the two men was enough to tell me what had caused that sudden tremendous outburst of enthusiasm among the patriots of Llundinno. In the last stages of the round which had just concluded the native son must have forged ahead in no uncertain manner. Perhaps some chance blow had found its way through the Battler's guard, laying him open and defenceless to the final attack. For his attitude, as he sagged in his corner, was that of one whose moments are numbered. His eyes were closed, his mouth hung open, and exhaustion was writ large upon him. Mr. Thomas, on the contrary, leaned forward with hands on knees, wearing an impatient look, as if this formality of a rest between rounds irked his imperious spirit.

The gong sounded and he sprang from his seat.

"Laddie!" breathed an anguished voice, and a hand clutched my arm.

I was dimly aware of Ukridge standing beside me. I shook him off. This was no moment for conversation.

My whole attention was concentrated on what was happening in the ring.

"I say, laddie!"

Matters in there had reached that tense stage when audiences lose their self-control—when strong men stand on seats and weak men cry "Siddown!" The air was full of that electrical thrill that precedes the knockout.

And the next moment it came. But it was not Lloyd Thomas who delivered it. From some mysterious reservoir of vitality Wilberforce Billson, the pride of Bermondsey, who an instant before had been reeling under his antagonist's blows like a stricken hulk before a hurricane, produced that one last punch that wins battles. Up it came, whizzing straight to its mark, a stupendous, miraculous uppercut which caught Mr. Thomas on the angle of the jaw just as he lurched forward to complete his task. It was the last word. Anything milder Llundnno's favourite son might have borne with fortitude, for his was a teak-like frame impervious to most things short of dynamite; but this was final. It left no avenue for argument or evasion. Lloyd Thomas spun round once in a complete circle, dropped his hands, and sank slowly to the ground.

There was one wild shout from the audience, and then a solemn hush fell. And in this hush Ukridge's voice spoke once more in my ear.

"I say, laddie, that blighter Previn has bolted with every penny of the receipts."

The little sitting-room of Number Seven Caerleon Street, was very quiet and gave the impression of being dark. This was because there was so much of Ukridge and he takes Fate's blows so hardly that, when anything

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goes wrong, his gloom seems to fill the room like a fog. For some minutes after our return from the Oddfellows' Hall a gruesome silence had prevailed. Ukridge had exhausted his vocabulary on the subject of Mr. Previn; and as for me, the disaster seemed so tremendous as to render words of sympathy a mere mockery. "And there's another thing I've just remembered," said Ukridge, hol-
lowly, stirring on his sofa.

"What's that?" I enquired, in a bedside voice.

"The bloke, Thomas. He was to have got another twenty pounds."

"He'll hardly claim it, surely?"

"He'll claim it all right," said Ukridge, moodily. "Except, by Jove," he went on, a sudden note of optimism in his voice, "that he doesn't know where I am. I was forgetting that. Lucky we legged it away from the hall before he could grab me."

"You don't think that Previn, when he was making the arrangements with Thomas's manager, may have mentioned where you were staying?"

"Not likely! Why should he? What reason would he have."

"Gentleman to see you, sir," crooned the aged female at the door.

The gentleman walked in. It was the man who had come to the dressing-room to announce that Thomas was in the ring; and though on that occasion we had not been formally introduced I did not need Ukridge's faint groan to tell me who he was.

"Mr. Previn?" he said. He was a brisk man, direct in manner and speech.

"He's not here," said Ukridge.

"You'll do. You're his partner. I've come for that twenty pounds."

There was a painful silence.

"It's gone," said Ukridge.

"What's gone?"

"The money, dash it. And Previn, too. He's bolted."

A hard look came into the other's eyes. Dim as the light was, it was strong enough to show his expression, and that expression was not an agreeable one.

"That won't do," he said, in a metallic voice.

"Now, my dear old horse——"

"It's no good trying anything like that on me. I want my money, or I'm going to call a policeman. Now, then!"

"But, laddie, be reasonable."

"Made a mistake in not getting it in advance. But now'll do. Out with it."

"But I keep telling you Previn's bolted!"

"He's certainly bolted," I put in trying to be helpful.

"That's right, mister," said a voice at the door. "I met 'im sneakin' away."

It was Wilberforce Billson. He stood in the doorway diffidently, as one not sure of his welcome. His whole bearing was apologetic. He had a nasty bruise on his left cheek and one of his eyes was closed, but he bore no other signs of his recent conflict.

Ukridge was gazing upon him with bulging eyes.

"You *met* him!" he moaned. "You actually met him?"

"R," said Mr. Billson. "When I was comin' to the 'all. I seen 'im puttin' all that money into a liddle bag, and then 'e 'urried off."

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"Good Lord!" I cried. "Didn't you suspect what he was up to?"

"R," agreed Mr. Billson. "I always knew 'e was a wrong 'un."

"Then why, you poor woollen-headed fish," bellowed Ukridge, exploding, "why on earth didn't you stop him?"

"I never thought of that," admitted Mr. Billson, apologetically.

Ukridge laughed a hideous laugh.

"I just pushed 'im in the face," proceeded Mr. Billson, "and took the liddle bag away from 'im."

He placed on the table a small weather-worn suitcase that jingled musically as he moved it; then, with the air of one who dismisses some triviality from his mind, moved to the door.

"'Scuse me, gents," said Battling Billson, deprecatingly, "Can't stop. I've got to go and spread the light."

A MATTER OF DUTY

By ANTHONY HOPE

LADY MICKLEHAM is back from her honeymoon. I mean young Lady Mickleham—Dolly Foster (well, of course I do. Fancy the Dowager on a honeymoon). She signified the fact to me by ordering me to call on her at tea-time; she had, she said, something that she wished to consult me about *confidentially*. I went.

"I didn't know you were back," I observed.

"Oh, we've been back a fortnight, but we went down to the Towers. They were all there, Mr. Carter."

"All who?"

"All Archie's people. The Dowager said we must really get to know one another as soon as possible. I'm not sure I like really knowing people. It means that they say whatever they like to you, and don't get up out of your favorite chair when you come in."

"I agree," said I, "that a *soupçon* of unfamiliarity is not amiss."

"Of course it's nice to be one of the family," she continued.

"The cat is that," said I. "I would not give a fig for it."

From *Dolly Dialogues* by Anthony Hope; Harper & Brothers, publishers, copyright, 1901.

A MATTER OF DUTY

"And the Dowager taught me the ways of the house."

"Ah, she taught me the way out of it."

"And showed me how to be most disagreeable to the servants."

"It is the first lesson of a housekeeper."

"And told me what Archie particularly liked, and how bad it was for him, poor boy."

"What should we do without our mother? I do not, however, see how I can help in all this, Lady Mickleham."

"How funny that sounds!"

"Aren't you accustomed to your dignity yet?"

"I meant from *you*, Mr. Carter."

I smiled. That was Dolly's way. As Miss Phaeton says, she means no harm, and it is admirably conducive to the pleasure of a *tête-à-tête*.

"It wasn't that I wanted to ask you about," she continued, after she had indulged in a pensive sigh (with a dutifully bright smile and a glance at Archie's photo to follow. Her behaviour always reminds me of a varied and well-assorted *menu*). "It was about something much more difficult. You won't tell Archie, will you?"

"This becomes interesting," I remarked, putting my hat down.

"You know, Mr. Carter, that before I was married—oh, how long ago it seems!"

"Not at all."

"Don't interrupt. That before I was married I had several—that is to say, several—well, several——"

"Start quite afresh," I suggested encouragingly.

"Well, then, several men were silly enough to think themselves—you know."

"No one better," I assented cheerfully.

"Oh, if you won't be sensible!—Well, you see, many of them are Archie's friends as well as mine; and of course, they've been to call."

"It is but good manners," said I.

"One of them waited to be sent for, though."

"Leave that fellow out," said I.

"What I want to ask you is this—and I believe you're not silly, really, you know, except when you choose to be."

"Walk in the Row any afternoon," said I, "and you won't find ten wiser men."

"It's this. Ought I to tell Archie?"

"Good gracious! Here's a problem."

"Of course," pursued Lady Mickleham, opening her fan, "it's in some ways more comfortable that he shouldn't know."

"For him——?"

"Yes—and for me. Because if he came to know from any one else, he might exaggerate the things, you know."

"Impossible!"

"Mr. Carter!"

"I—er—mean he knows you too well to do such a thing."

"Oh, I see. Thank you. Yes. What do you think?"

"What does the Dowager say?"

"I haven't mentioned it to the Dowager."

"But surely, on such a point, her experience——"

"She can't have any," said Lady Mickleham decisively.

"I believe in her husband, because I must. But nobody else! You're not giving me your opinion."

I reflected for a moment.

"Haven't we left out one point of view?" I ventured to suggest.

"I've thought it all over very carefully," said she; "both as it would affect me and as it would affect Archie."

"Quite so. Now suppose you think how it would affect them!"

"Who?"

"Why, the men."

Lady Mickleham put down her cup of tea.

"What a very curious idea!" she exclaimed.

"Give it time to sink in," said I, helping myself to another piece of toast.

She sat silent for a few moments—presumably to allow of the permeation I suggested. I finished my tea and leant back comfortably. Then I said, "Let me take my own case. Shouldn't I feel rather awkward——?"

"Oh, it's no good taking your case," she interrupted.

"Why not mine as well as another?"

"Because I told him about you long ago."

I was not surprised. But I could not permit Lady Mickleham to laugh at me in the unconscionable manner in which she proceeded to laugh. I spread out my hands and observed blandly.

"Why not be guided—as to the others, I mean—by your husband's example."

"Archie's example? What's that?"

"I don't know; but you do, I suppose."

"What do you mean, Mr. Carter?" she asked, sitting upright.

"Well, has he ever told you about Maggie Adeane?"

"I never heard of her."

"Or Lilly Courtenay?"

"*That* girl!"

"Or Alice Layton?"

"The red-haired Layton?"

"Or Florence Cunliffe?"

"Who was she?"

"Or Millie Trehearne?"

"She squints, Mr. Carter."

"Or——"

"Stop, stop! What do you mean? What should he tell me?"

"Oh, I see he hasn't. Nor, I suppose, about Sylvia Fenton, or the little Delancy girl, or handsome Miss —— what was her name?"

"Hold your tongue—and tell me what you mean."

"Lady Mickleham," I said gravely, "if your husband has not seen fit to mention these ladies—and others whom I could name—to you, how could I presume——?"

"Do you mean to tell me that Archie——?"

"He'd only known you three years, you see."

"Then it was before——?"

"Some of them were before," said I.

Lady Mickleham drew a long breath.

"Archie will be in soon," said she.

I took my hat.

"It seems to me," I observed, "that what is sauce—that, I should say, husband and wife ought to stand on an equal footing in these matters. Since he has—no doubt for good reasons—not mentioned to you——"

"Alice Layton was a positive fright."

"She came last," said I. "Just before you, you know. However, as I was saying——"

A MATTER OF DUTY

"And that horrible Sylvia Fenton——"

"Oh, he couldn't have known you long then. As I was saying, I should, if I were you, treat him as he has treated you. In my case it seems to be too late."

"I'm sorry I told him that."

"Oh, pray don't mind, it's of no consequence. As to the others——"

"I should never have thought it of Archie!"

"One never knows," said I, with an apologetic smile.

"I don't suppose he thinks it of you."

"I won't tell him a single word. He may find out if he likes. Who was the last girl you mentioned?"

"Is it any use trying to remember all their names?" I asked in a soothing tone. "No doubt he's forgotten them by now—just as you've forgotten the others."

"And the Dowager told me he had never had an attachment before."

"Oh, if the Dowager said that! Of course, the Dowager would know!"

"Don't be so silly, for goodness sake! are you going?"

"Certainly I am. It might annoy Archie to find me here when he wants to talk to you."

"Well, I want to talk to him."

"Of course you won't repeat what I've——"

"I shall find out for myself," she said.

"Good-bye. I hope I've removed all your troubles?"

"Oh, yes, thank you. I know what to do now, Mr. Carter."

"Always send for me if you're in any trouble. I have some exp——"

"Good-bye, Mr. Carter."

28 HUMOROUS STORIES

"Good-bye, Lady Mickleham. And remember that Archie, like you——"

"Yes, yes; I know. Must you go?"

"I'm afraid I must. I've enjoyed our talk so——"

"There's Archie's step."

I left the room. On the stairs I met Archie. I shook hands sympathetically. I was sorry for Archie. But in great causes the individual cannot be considered. I had done my duty to my sex,

AT ARMS WITH MORPHEUS

By O. HENRY

I NEVER could quite understand how Tom Hopkins came to make that blue blunder, for he had been through a whole term at a medical college—before he inherited his aunt's fortune—and had been considered strong in therapeutics.

We had been making a call together that evening, and afterwards Tom ran up to my rooms for a pipe and a chat before going on to his own luxurious apartment. I had stepped into the other room for a moment when I heard Tom sing out:

"Oh, Billy, I'm going to take about four grains of quinine, if you don't mind—I'm feeling all blue and shivery. Guess I'm taking cold."

"All right," I called back. "The bottle is on the second shelf. Take it in a spoonful of that elixir of eucalyptus. It knocks the bitter out."

After I came back we sat by the fire and got our briars going. In about eight minutes Tom sank back into a gentle collapse.

I went straight to the medicine chest and looked.

"You unmitigated hayseed!" I growled. "See what money will do for a man's brains!"

From *Sixes and Sevens*, by O. Henry, copyright, 1903, by Doubleday, Page & Company.

There stood the morphine bottle with the stopper out, just as Tom had left it.

I routed out another young M.D. who roomed on the floor above, and sent him for old Doctor Gales, two squares away. Tom Hopkins has too much money to be attended by rising young practitioners alone.

When Gales came we put Tom through as expensive a course of treatment as the resources of the profession permit. After the more drastic remedies we gave him citrate of caffeine in frequent doses and strong coffee, and walked him up and down the floor between two of us. Old Gales pinched him and slapped his face and worked hard for the big cheque he could see in the distance. The young M.D. from the next floor gave Tom a most hearty, rousing kick, and then apologized to me.

"Couldn't help it," he said. "I never kicked a millionaire before in my life. I may never have another opportunity."

"Now," said Doctor Gales, after a couple of hours, "he'll do. But keep him awake for another hour. You can do that by talking to him and shaking him up occasionally. When his pulse and respiration are normal then let him sleep. I'll leave him with you now."

I was left alone with Tom, whom we had laid on a couch. He lay very still, and his eyes were half closed. I began my work of keeping him awake.

"Well, old man," I said, "you've had a narrow squeak, but we've pulled you through. When you were attending lectures, Tom, didn't any of the professors ever casually remark that m-o-r-p-h-i-a never spells 'quinia,' especially in four-grain doses? But I won't pile it up on you until you get on your feet. But you ought to have been a

AT ARMS WITH MORPHEUS

druggist, Tom; you're splendidly qualified to fill prescriptions."

Tom looked at me with a faint and foolish smile.

"B'ly," he murmured, "I feel jus' like a hum'n bird flyin' around a jolly lot of most 'shpensive roses. Don' bozzer me. Goin' sleep now."

And he went to sleep in two seconds. I shook him by the shoulder.

"Now, Tom," I said severely, "this won't do. The big doctor said you must stay awake for at least an hour. Open your eyes. You're not entirely safe yet, you know. Wake up."

Tom Hopkins weighs one hundred and ninety-eight. He gave me another somnolent grin and fell into deeper slumber. I would have made him move about, but I might as well have tried to make Cleopatra's Needle waltz around the room with me. Tom's breathing became stertorous, and that, in connection with morphia poisoning, means danger.

Then I began to think. I could not rouse his body; I must try to excite his mind. "Make him angry," was an idea that suggested itself! Good! I thought; but how? There was not a joint in Tom's armour. Dear old fellow! He was good-nature itself, and a gallant gentleman, fine and true and clean as sunlight. He came from somewhere down South, where they still have ideals and a code. New York had charmed, but had not spoiled him. He had that old-fashioned, chivalrous reverence for women, that—Eureka!—there was my idea! I worked the thing up for a minute or two in my imagination. I chuckled to myself at the thought of springing a thing like that on old Tom Hopkins. Then I took him by the shoulder

and shook him till his ears flopped. He opened his eyes lazily. I assumed an expression of scorn and contempt, and pointed my finger within two inches of his nose.

"Listen to me, Hopkins," I said, in cutting and distinct tones, "you and I have been good friends, but I want you to understand that in the future my doors are closed against any man who acts as much like a scoundrel as you have."

Tom looked the least bit interested.

"What's the matter, Billy?" he muttered, composedly. "Don't your clothes fit you?"

"If I were in your place," I went on, "which, thank God, I'm not, I think I would be afraid to close my eyes. How about that girl you left waiting for you down among those lonesome Southern pines—the girl that you've forgotten since you came into your confounded money? Oh, I know what I'm talking about. While you were a poor medical student she was good enough for you. But now, since you are a millionaire, it's different. I wonder what she thinks of the performance of that peculiar class of people which she has been taught to worship—the Southern gentleman? I'm sorry, Hopkins, that I was forced to speak about these matters, but you've covered it up so well and played your part so nicely that I would have sworn you were above such unmanly tricks."

Poor Tom. I could scarcely keep from laughing outright to see him struggling against the effects of the opiate. He was distinctly angry, and I didn't blame him. Tom had a Southern temper. His eyes were open now, and they showed a gleam or two of fire. But the drug still clouded his mind and bound his tongue.

"C-c-confound you," he stammered, "I'll s-smash you."

AT ARMS WITH MORPHEUS

He tried to rise from the couch. With all his size he was very weak now. I thrust him back with one arm. He lay there glaring like a lion in a trap.

"That will hold you for awhile, you old loony," I said to myself. I got up and lit my pipe, for I was needing a smoke. I walked around a bit, congratulating myself on my brilliant idea.

I heard a snore. I looked around. Tom was asleep again. I walked over and punched him on the jaw. He looked at me as pleasant and ungrudging as an idiot. I chewed my pipe and gave it to him hard.

"I want you to recover yourself and get out of my rooms as soon as you can," I said insultingly. "I've told you what I think of you. If you have any honor or honesty left you will think twice before you attempt again to associate with gentlemen. She's a poor girl, isn't she?" I sneered. "Somewhat too plain and unfashionable for us since we got our money. Be ashamed to walk on Fifth Avenue with her, wouldn't you? Hopkins, you're forty-seven times worse than a cad. Who cares for your money? I don't. I'll bet that girl don't. Perhaps if you didn't have it you'd be more of a man. As it is you've made a cur of yourself, and—" I thought that quite dramatic—"perhaps broken a faithful heart." (Old Tom Hopkins breaking a faithful heart!) "Let me be rid of you as soon as possible."

I turned my back on Tom, and winked at myself in a mirror. I heard him moving, and I turned again quickly. I didn't want a hundred and ninety-eight pounds falling upon me from the rear. But Tom had only turned partly over, and laid one arm across his face. He spoke a few words rather more distinctly than before.

"I couldn't have—talked this way—to you, Billy, even if I'd heard people—lyin' 'bout you. But jus' soon's I can s-stand up—I'll break your neck—don' f'get it."

I did feel a little ashamed then. But it was to save Tom. In the morning, when I explained it, we would have a good laugh over it together.

In about twenty minutes Tom dropped into a sound, easy slumber. I felt his pulse, listened to his respiration and let him sleep. Everything was normal, and Tom was safe. I went into the other room and tumbled into bed.

I found Tom up and dressed when I awoke the next morning. He was entirely himself again with the exception of shaky nerves and a tongue like a white-oak chip.

"What an idiot I was," he said thoughtfully. "I remember thinking that quinine bottle looked queer while I was taking the dose. Have much trouble in bringing me round?"

I told him no. His memory seemed bad about the whole affair. I concluded that he had no recollection of my efforts to keep him awake, and decided not to enlighten him. Some other time, I thought, when he was feeling better, we would have some fun over it.

When Tom was ready to go he stopped, with the door open, and shook my hand.

"Much obliged, old fellow," he said quietly, "for taking so much trouble with me—and for what you said. I'm going down now to telegraph to the little girl."

(1)

THE END

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